JUNE

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by JESSIE KERRUISH

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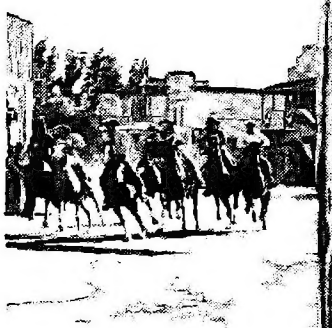

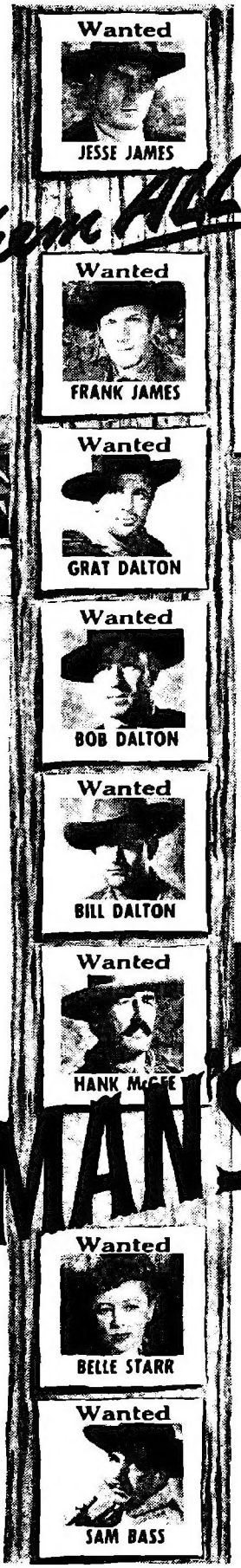

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GREAT SCOTT, MIDGE! THAT MAY BE THE MISSING OTIS CHILD! LET'S GO, WILLIS!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
I'M PEMBROKE FROM HEADQUARTERS, SHERIFF. I'VE JUST FOUND THE OTIS BOY AND HIS KIDNAPPER IN THIS OLD HOUSE. LET'S GET TO YOUR OFFICE QUICK
THE CHIEF AND MR. OTIS ARE ON THEIR WAY... WHEW! I'M TIRED. BEEN ON THE TRAIL 2 DAYS
WHY NOT FRESHEN UP WHILE WE'RE WAITING
SOME BLADE, SHERIFF. I'VE NEVER ENJOYED A QUICKER, SMOOTHER SHAVE
YES, THOSE THIN GILLETTES ARE PLENTY KEEN AND EASY-SHAVING
GREAT WORK, PEMBROKE! BREAKING THIS CASE CINCHES YOUR PROMOTION
HE'S BETTER-LOOKING THAN I THOUGHT
NOW—ONE OF YOU AND THE SHERIFF'S DAUGHTER
WITH PLEASURE!
SHE'S LOVELY
I DETECT ROMANCE, THANKS TO THIN GILLETTE
THIN GILLETTES ALWAYS GIVE YOU SMOOTH, REFRESHING SHAVES THAT MAKE YOU LOOK RIGHT ON THE BEAM AND FEEL SWELL THEY'RE THE SHARPEST, EASIEST-SHAVING LOW-PRICED BLADES YOU EVER TRIED. WHAT'S MORE, THEY'RE PRECISION-MADE FOR YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR AND PROTECT YOU FROM THE DISCOMFORT CAUSED BY MISFIT BLADES. ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES
THIN GILLETTE BLADES
10

Famous
FANTASTIC
Mysteries

25¢

VOL. VII | JUNE, 1946 | NO. 4

Book-Length Novel

The Undying Monster — **Jessie Douglas Kerruish** — **12**

A place of midnight silence . . . an hour when Death gave up its secrets . . . a moment when a doomed man dared reach beyond the grave to save generations yet unborn. . . .

First N. A. Magazine Rights purchased from the Macmillan Company.

Short Novel

The Novel of the Black Seal — **Arthur Machen** — **109**

Unspeakable are the punishments wreaked by the denizens of the nether-world upon those who dare to venture into their secret haunts. . . .

N. A. Magazine Rights purchased from the Richards Press, Ltd., London, England.

The Readers' Viewpoint — **6**

In the Next Issue — **51**

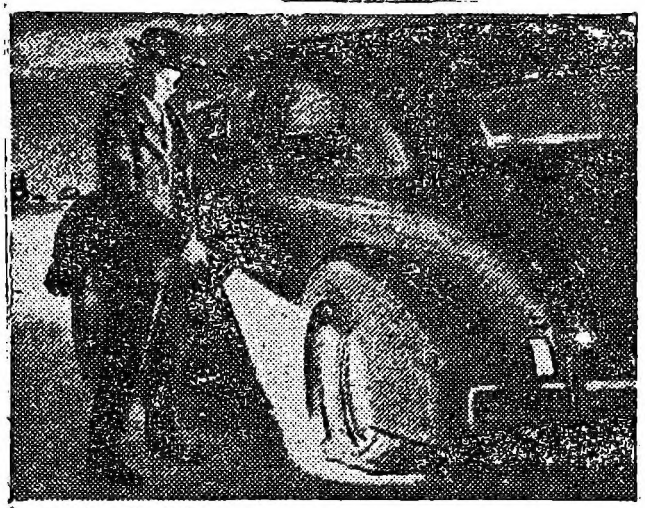
Cover and inside illustrations by Lawrence.

N. A. Magazine Rights purchased from the Richards Press, Ltd., London, England.

Published bi-monthly by All-Fiction Field, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, 16, Ill. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East Forty-second Street, New York City, 17. Henry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice-President and Treasurer. Entered as second class matter May 28, 1943, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1946, by All-Fiction Field, Inc. Single copy price 25c. Yearly subscription $1.50 in United States, its dependencies, and Mexico and Cuba. Foreign postage 50c additional. For advertising rates address Sam J. Perry, 205 E. 42nd St., New York, N. Y. When submitting manuscripts kindly enclose self-addressed stamped envelope for their return if found unavailable and send them to Editorial Dept., 205 E. 42nd St., New York, N. Y. The publishers cannot accept responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, although care will be exercised in handling them. All rights reserved under Pan American copyright convention. Printed in U. S. A.

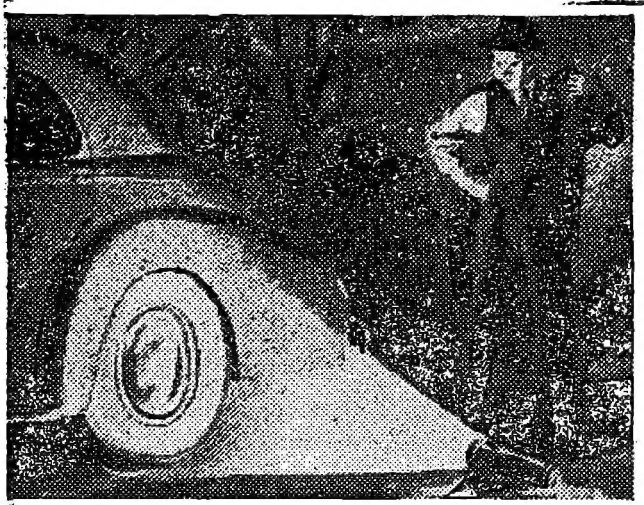
How to CHANGE A TIRE AT NIGHT...

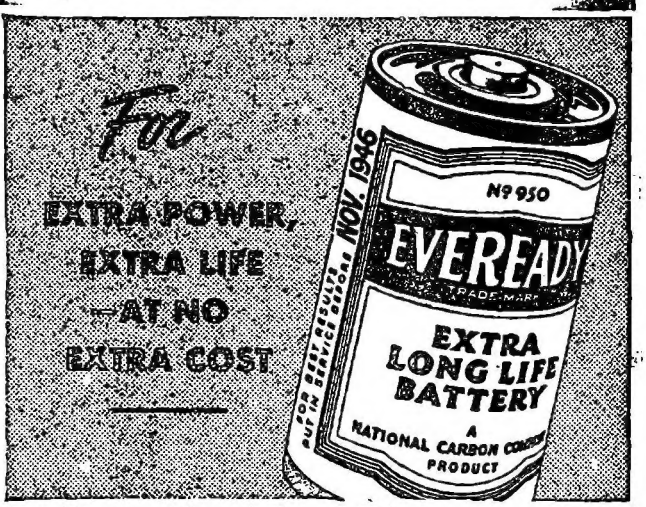
More Quickly—More Safely!



1 Most any motorist can change a tire. But few can change it at night with top speed, efficiency —and *safety!* Night-time tire-changing can be hazardous—but a little care and an "Eveready" flashlight can reduce the danger. First principle, says the American Automobile Association, is...

2 Park *off* the highway, if at all possible. Next best place is on a *straight* stretch of road where you can be seen for at least 500 feet. If you *must* park on a curve, a light should be set on the road some distance back. Be sure neither you nor a bystander blocks off the view of your tail-light!





3 Keep all your tire-changing tools tied or boxed *together*, where you can pick them up without searching or fumbling. Remove your spare before jacking up car—tugging at it later might push car off jack. If alone, set flashlight on a stone in convenient position.

4 In your car or at home—wherever you need a flashlight—rely only on "Eveready" batteries. For "Eveready" batteries have no equals... that's why you'll find them in *more* flashlights than any other battery in the world! Now that they're available again, there's no need to accept a substitute!

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The Readers' Viewpoint

Address comments to the Letter Editor, Famous Fantastic Mysteries, All-Fiction Field, Inc., 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, New York

OKINAWA SHIMA—JAN. 28

Dear Editors:

I'm very happy to hear that F.F.M. is coming out oftener and hope I will be able to contribute to it regularly in the near future.

I am optimistically looking forward to being a civilian again in the latter part of March, and hope to get back to work sometime in April.

I was in engineer reconnaissance here until things quieted down and was then shifted to my present job as draftsman-illustrator for the Surgeon General.

I should be climbing up the side of a ship in the next two weeks or so and will get in touch with you in New York as soon as I can see my way clear to tear myself away from my wife and those wonderful Stateside things; such as food, etc.

I hope to resume many pleasant associations soon and certainly working with Popular will not be the least of them.

Just give me time to tell my wife about the battle of Okinawa, take a good long look at those nice big dirty buildings in New York, and I'll be seeing you.

Best wishes,
VIRGIL FINLAY.

F.F.M. GOING PLACES

Having just completed the latest issue of your splendid publication, I make haste to congratulate. Taine has never failed to write an interesting novel—and "Before the Dawn" is no exception. Though it is not in any way connected, it is much similar to "Day of the Brown Horde"—giving an animal's viewpoint. (That might be Mammal, if one is technical.)

Since I have no comment further to make of Taine's novel, I skip to "The House of the Secret" to make corrections. In my way of translating from the French, "*Le Maison des Hommes Vivants,*" is rightly "The House of the Living Men." No doubt you changed the title to give a clearer understanding as to the story—thinking it would be wrongly interpreted. It has been ages since I read so different and excellent a novel. Please let us have more of this type in the future.

Glancing at the "Readers' Viewpoint," I find that many of them have splendid suggestions for future publication. I like Haggard's style, and shall welcome any future novels of his you publish.

Lawrence is without doubt a close runner-up for Virgil Finlay. He is very near to capturing his all around individuality.

I wait very anxiously for "The Island of Captain Sparrow." It is, I understand, a supreme achievement in imaginative fiction. Looks like our magazine, F.F.M., is going places—and how!

JOHN M. CUNNINGHAM.
2050 Gilbert St.,
Beaumont, Texas.

Editor's Note: The title of the Farrère story was given to it by the American publisher who evidently thought as you suggest. It was copyright under the new name in this country.

FEB. ISSUE TOP-NOTCH

The February issue of F.F.M. was top-notch. "Before the Dawn" rang the bell and "House of the Secret" was a beauty.

The drawings for Farrère's yarn outclassed those for Taine's. If you have any more yarns by Farrère, let's have 'em!

I sure am glad to see you come out more often. My prayers must have been answered. Now that the war is over and the let-up in the paper shortage, why not start a companion publication reprinting old magazine classics!

The forthcoming "Island of Captain Sparrow" looks like a goody. "The Willows" is eagerly awaited also.

Let's have more stories about lost continents, and how about some interplanetary stories? Some good examples are: "Door to Saturn," "Keethra," "Voyage to Sfanomoe," all by Clark Ashton Smith. "The Lost World" by A. Conan Doyle. "Pellucidar" by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

I hope you have a long life and keep these fine classics coming at such a low price!

ROY HALE.
272 Dawn Ave.,
Mankato, Minn.

A TRUE FANTASITE

I have been reading your magazine since I came in the U.S.A.—about six years. I practically learned to read English through this magazine, trying to understand fine fantastic novels which were very hard to find in the European libraries. I came from Transylvania, not far away from Lugos, a small mountain village where, *as I heard here,* the people were very superstitious, believing tales of vampires, supernaturals, ghosts and so on. I didn't know this till I came here, but now I understand why all the fantastic, utopian stories interest me.

When I saw this magazine the first time I didn't understand much of the stories. I enjoyed the illustrations, saved the magazines, and later it was a thrill to understand all. Am very pleased it will be coming out more often now.

Now a little criticism. Your latest novel "Before the Dawn" by J. Taine was excellent, like all Taine's work, the cover a masterpiece

(Continued on page 8)

HERE COME THE DEMBROWS!
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HUNTED!
FEARED!
in TECHNICOLOR!
"Sure, my man's a Dembrow ...and I'd follow him..."
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with
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WILLARD PARKER
LARRY PARKS
EDGAR BUCHANAN
Screenplay by Melvin Levy and Francis Edwards Faragoh
Produced by MICHEL KRAIKE
Directed by GEORGE SHERMAN
COLUMBIA

(Continued from page 6)

which speaks for itself, but the inside illustrations were spiritless—have not much form. I liked most: The Afterglow, Polaris of the Snows, The Mouthpiece of Zitu, The Iron Star, The Day of the Brown Horde and The Ancient Allan.

And now because I came from Transylvania where the folks like mysteries and are afraid of the supernatural, I ask some of the readers if they have any back copies of F.F.M. for exchange.

MRS. M. DOMINICK.

P. O. Box 175,
New Brunswick, N. J.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is over five years since I last wrote you. I have spent most of that time in the Far East and recently arrived home to find my copies of F.F.M. and F.N. have been arriving fairly regularly and have only a few issues missing. I can now relax and catch up with a few years' back reading.

I have read all the readers' letters first just to put myself back in the picture. I like your present policy so far as it goes, but can't see why you should restrict yourself exclusively to novels which have not yet appeared in pulp. After all, Fantasy is where you find it, and there is some good stuff left in pulp which fans have been demanding for years. On the other hand don't go back to pulp if you are going to print "interplanetary" wild-west stories which by no stretch of the imagination can be called fantastic mysteries. I do agree there is a lot of good stuff in book form and I will not complain if you continue with your present standard of selections. You have certainly raised the standard of our mag. above the ordinary. I think readers should help you by recommending more books and authors than they do. The same small number of stories are demanded time and again. Tho' I am in favor of their being printed surely there must be many more. English authors, I see, now figure very prominently in F.F.M. and American fans seem to like them. But apart from Chesterton, Hodgson, Machen, Dunsany, Wayland Smith, Bradford, Haggard and Hyne, there is Olaf Stapledon, Fowler Wright, M. P. Shiel, John Beynon, Victor McClure, Alan Hyder, etc. There are old "classics" too; in my possession I have a first edition (1896) of "The Devil Tree of Eldorado" by Frank Aubrey and a first edition (1899) of "The Phantom City" by William Westall. I don't think they were ever published in America. Incidentally I would be willing to trade them to a collector for back issues of F.F.M. and F.N. More recently we have Dennis Wheatley; in one of your issues a fellow countryman of mine, Dennis Tucker suggested "The Devil Rides Out." Tho' this is a very good yarn, Wheatley himself says it is based on fact so is hardly suitable. I do, however strangely, recommend "They Found Atlantis" and "Uncharted Seas" both very outstanding stories by this author. Other authors I would like to see are: Balmer and Wylie, Victor Rousseau, Homer Eon Flint, H. P. Lovecraft, Theodore Roscoe, H. A. Lamb, Steven Chalmers and Garrett Smith.

Your artists are very good, especially Lawrence. My favorite is Finlay, particularly on covers. My only fault with your artists is that they usually illustrate the least imaginative part of the story. May I also put in a plea for more illustrations? I would like to thank you for the issues you have sent me and for the splendid service you have rendered to fantasy fans everywhere in printing the greatest stories ever written. I have duplicates of "The Face in the Abyss," "The Sun Makers" and "The Spot of Life" issues which I will trade for any F.N. Nos. 1, 3 and 5 or Nov., Dec. '39, Jan., June '40, Dec. '41 and Mar. '43 F.F.M.

Keep up the good work.

ARNOLD WOOD.

17 Sandringham Rd.,
Bredbury,
Stockport,
Cheshire, England.

NO COMPLAINTS

Outside of a few copies I have read and enjoyed your issues of F.F.M. and F.N.

Though I was a bit disappointed that F.N. was discontinued, I had my morale go lower yet when the policy of the publisher was to print new stories. I know that we all love the old classics yet we are afraid that we may miss the new ones.

I have no kick at any of the stories that you have so far published as I know that what I may consider as weak material is well liked by others and it can be reversed in other cases.

I understand that there is to be some one publishing pocket book editions of the old classics. Can you please enlighten me on that.

Also would like to know if any of your readers could help me out in getting a copy of "The Spot of Life" by Hall; "People of the Pit" and "Three Lines of Old French" by A. Merritt and "Palos of the Dog Star Pack" by Giesy. These I know or believe were printed in your magazine and if any one has a copy to spare I wish they would help me out.

Hoping that I may hear from some one and your issues get better,

PETER KOS.

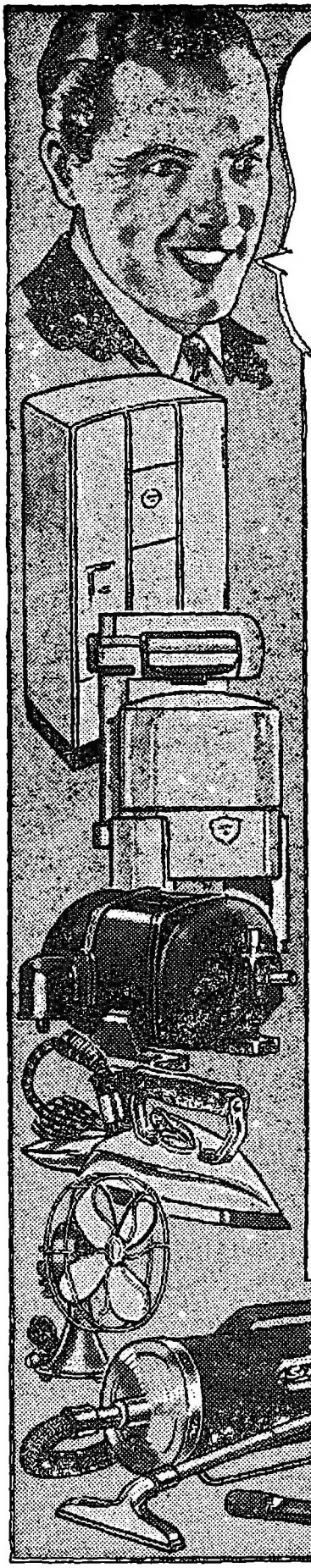
6834 Parkwood Ave.,
Detroit 10, Mich.

Editor's Note: There are no definite plans as yet for bringing out the old classics in small book form from this company.

AN OFFER

This is a cry for help. Can any of your readers supply me with any copies of *Astonishing Stories* and *Super Science Stories* as owing to the War I missed all these. I also require any *Fantastic Novels* and any F.F.M.'s previous to March, 1943. I have about 50 various S.F. and weird magazines for exchange and if any of your readers are stamp collectors, I can send them New Zealand stamps in exchange. We have a new Peace Issue of 11 stamps coming out March, 1946.

(Continued on page 10)



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I have received your Course in Appliance Repairing and I must say I am well pleased with same. I am only sorry I did not have said Course some years ago. I have learned so much more through this course I would not part with it.—Charles Schwarz, Hamilton, Ohio.

The Course in Appliance Servicing arrived a few days ago. Want to take out a few minutes of my valuable time to let you know that this is just what I have been looking for ever since I opened up my Fix-It shop. I must admit that you told the truth when you said that it contains quite a bit more information than I bargained for.—P. J. Bretl, Sebring, Ohio.

I am a mechanic for the Western Union Telegraph Co. Three days after receiving the lessons in refrigeration I earned the exact cost of the course.—Henry S. Lee, Washington, D. C.

I work day times at the shipyard and after 4:00 P.M. I operate from my cellar and garage. I average $10.00 to $15.00 clear every day.—Walter Hanby, Brockton, Mass.

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(Continued from page 8)

Pleased to see F.F.M. is going monthly, now perhaps we will get Earle Cox's "Out of the Silence."

JACK MURTAGH.

509 Selwood Rd.,
Hastings,
New Zealand.

COLLECTORS PLEASE NOTE

I wish to take this opportunity to compliment you on the quality of the present set-up of F.F.M. and to ask if there might be a possibility of disposing of one of the two sets of complete collections of F.F.M. and F.N. in my possession. I wish to obtain:

"Three Against the Stars," "Lords of Creation," by Eando Binder; "Before the Dawn," "The Purple Sapphire," "The Gold Tooth," "Green Fire," by Taine; "Last and First Men," "The Star Maker," "Warring World," by Stapledon; "House on the Borderland," "Night Land," by Hodgson; "The World Below," by Wright; "The Purple Cloud," by Shiel; "Polaris and the Goddess Glorian," "Jason, Son of Jason," "Minos of Sardanes," by Giesy; "Warlord of Venus," "Margo, the Mighty," (Author ?); "Princess of the Light Country," "Fire Planet," "Tama, Princess of Mercury," "The Snow Girl," "The Sea Girl," "Flood," "The Fire Girl," by Cummings; "The Mad Planet," by Leinster; "Maza of the Moon," "The Swordsman of Mars," "The Outlaws of Mars," "The Prince of Peril," "Planet of Peril," "Thing of a Thousand Shapes," by Kline; "The Sea Demons," "World's End," by Rousseau.

V. R. HEINER.

346 Third Ave.,
California, Pa.

RATING 1945 F.F.M.

When about one-third of the way into "Before the Dawn," I suppose many who are reading it for the first time will be not a little disappointed. I know that I was. The concept of the chief human characters not being the center of action will balk the satisfaction of some readers. When, however, one gets into the story of Belshazzar, one forgets this irritation and the story lives up to its author.

Although the Feb. cover is good, I can think of several other scenes that I would have preferred. I would have liked to see a pic of Belshazzar while crossing the bridge or his last fight with Satan.

I don't think that any of Olaf Stapledon's works have appeared in magazines so I wish that you'd print them. All except "Odd John," that is, for it is obtainable in book form.

It seems that I haven't commented on your past issues for some time so what say to a review of 1945? Ah! 1945! I'm sure that this year will long be remembered for a 100% improvement over 1944, the first really complete year of Popular ownership of F.F.M. 1945 saw three classic-type novels, generally acclaimed by all. The best cover was the Sept., that so deeply showed the mood of the masterpiece it depicted. Second is the Dec. cover. The other two take third place jointly. As to the stories, ah-ugh-well-hmmmm. To tell the truth, I can't rate them. The Machine Stops, The Wonderful Adventures of Phra the Phoenician, and The Ancient Allen all are tied for first place. Even a Worm takes second place, Before I Wake, third, Heaven Only Knows, fourth, and The Hashish Man, fifth. I will not rate The Boats of the Glen Carrig because I couldn't read it. I've heard of its swell ending but no matter how many times I try to read it, I just can't get through it. The interior pictures this year of course give top honors to Lawrence.

I see that he has used some of his pencil work of the type that made him famous in *Astonishing*, in the latest issues.

HAROLD W. CHENEY, JR.

584 E. Monroe St.,
Little Falls, N. Y.

PORTFOLIO FINE

I really enjoyed "Phra" and "The Ancient Allan." Had read both some twenty years ago, but found they had lost nothing on rereading. Taine, Hodgson and Haggard provide excellent material, but I earnestly suggest that you consider usage of "The Purple Cloud" or some other masterpiece by M. P. Shiel.

I'm making a great effort to complete my collection of F.N. and F.F.M. Perhaps some of your readers can help me.

To conclude, the Lawrence Portfolio is excellent. Are any of the other portfolios available?

A. F. GERMESHAUSER.

3118 W. 9th St.,
Los Angeles 6, Calif.

Editor's Note: There is only one Lawrence Portfolio available at present. There are a few of these left, at 75c each.

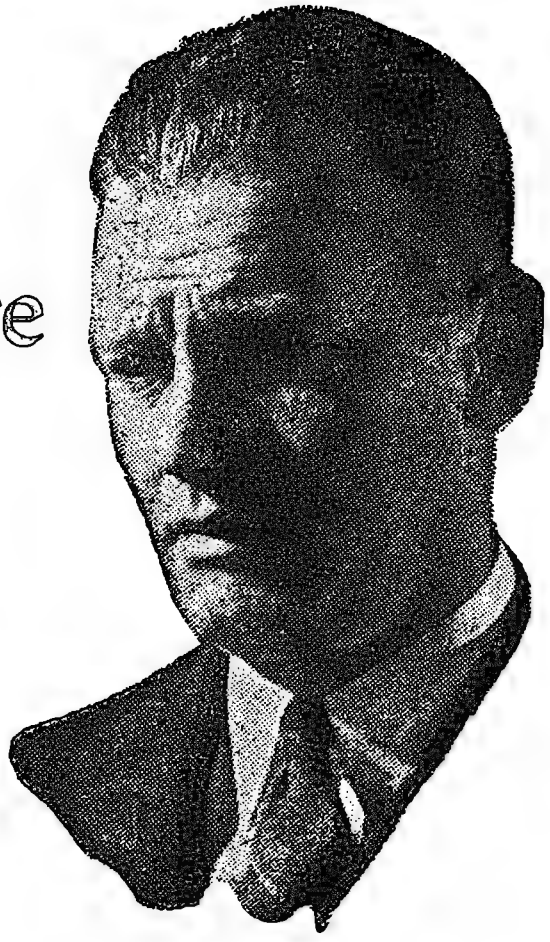
WANTS "OTHER PLANET" YARNS

Have just finished reading "The Ancient Allan." It is a very good story although I read it several years ago, I enjoyed reading it again. Wish you would print "The Ivory Child" which seems to be the first part of "The Ancient Allan." As for the short story, I did not like it. Am getting rather tired of Dunsany myself, although lots of the other fans seem to like him. I did not enjoy "Phra the Phoenician" as much as I did the last time I read it several years ago, although the idea of the story is fantastic enough. I do wish you would print a story of other planets or something on that order. Had a chance to get a copy of "The White Lily" by Taine a while back. After reading it, I think it was a little over-rated. Now that the war is over, is there any chance of F.F.M. coming out a little oftener? All the other fantastic magazines seem to be deteriorating and it is a long time to wait for something good to read. By the way, that illustration of the Holy Tanofir on page 95 looked a lot like Finlay's work. The other illustrations were good too.

R. H. MALONE.

R. 1, Box 577,
Eureka, Calif.

What keeps YOU from making more MONEY?



JUST what is the matter—why aren't you making more money? Look around you. Probably many of the people you know are doing a lot better than you are.

What's the reason?

Your own native ability is probably just as good as theirs—probably nothing wrong with your personality and appearance.

But—*they have something you lack.* The fact that they have a better job and more money proves that. Success in business today is measured by the dollar sign.

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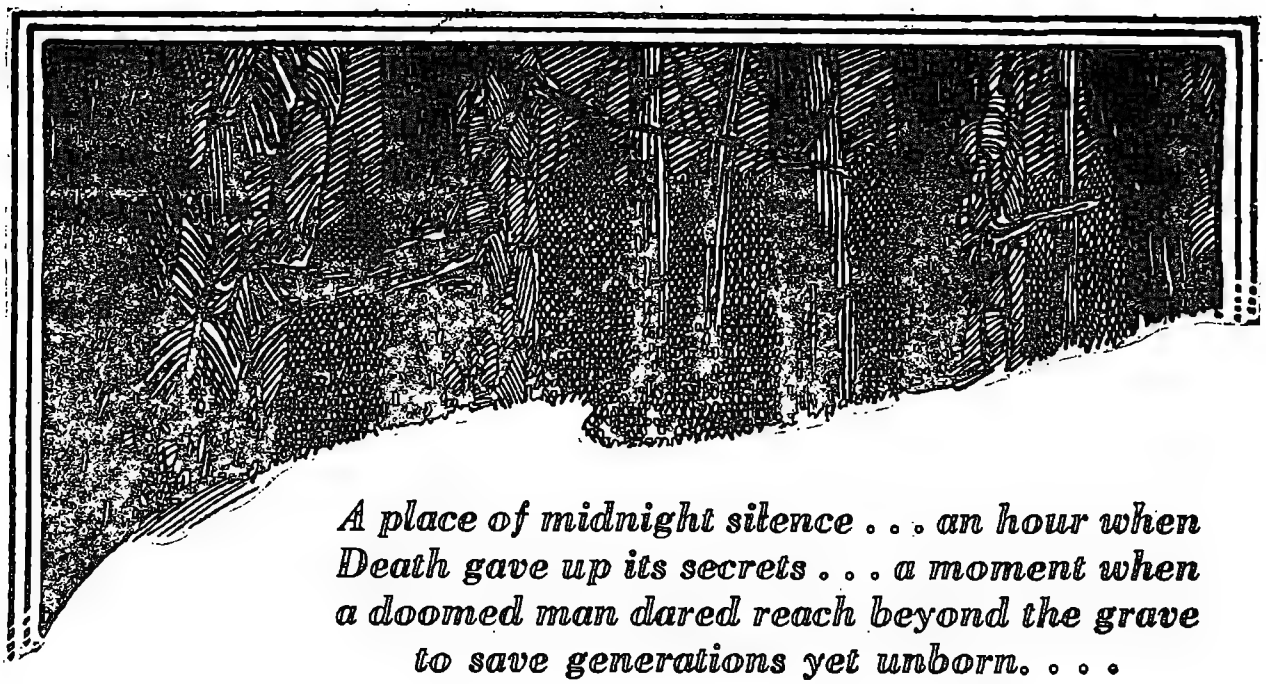
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Stenotypy (Machine Shorthand)

*Name*_____ *Age*_____

*Present Position*_____

*City, Zone and State*_____

The face wore a look of human hate and wolfish ferocity, fantastically mingled.



A place of midnight silence . . . an hour when Death gave up its secrets . . . a moment when a doomed man dared reach beyond the grave to save generations yet unborn. . . .

THE UNDYING MONSTER

By Jessie Douglas Kerruish

CHAPTER I

TO THUNDERBARROW SHAW

THE end of the Fifty-two Months' War left the family of Hammand of Dannow reduced to two members. The two had always been good pals, Oliver Hammand and Swanhild his sister, and now they were left alone the bond between them was tensified.

Swanhild told herself that as she waited on that winter night. It was to allay her growing nervousness that she dwelt on it. She fidgeted too much over Oliver, so she impressed on herself as she looked at the clock for the fifth time between 11:35 and midnight. It was not true, but it served to reassure her for several seconds. She really had cause for uneasiness. Oliver was out late, and it was the kind of night against which the ancient family rhyme warned the Hammands of Dannow:

"Where grow pines and firs amain,
Under Stars, sans heat or rain,
Chief of Hammand, 'ware thy Bane!"

Starlit, that is, and dry and cold. There was a breeze down in the Weald of Sussex, which meant that Dannow, up on the Downs, was in the track of half a gale. It was not a noisy wind, but the kind that suggests something very big and thin, fresh from the horror of Infinite Space. Swanhild could not hear it distinctly, the Manor walls are a yard thick, only she felt it sweep round the building, and there is nothing more harrowing than a deadly hush with the feel of a great noise round it.

She waited in the Holbein Room, not the best place in the circumstances. Flanking the fireplace were the two dubious Holbeins; portraits of Godfrey Hammand and

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his wife—both killed by the Undying Monster of Dannow on a frosty night in 1556. Over the mantelpiece the little black Streete portrait of Godfrey's father, Sir Magnus the Warlock, who committed suicide after surviving an encounter with the Monster on a frosty night of 1526. Swanhild saw all three whenever she consulted the clock, as only one lamp was lit, over the mantel, and they were enshrined in a little oasis of warmth and light in the vast spread of wainscoted room.

The rest of the apartment was all shifting shadows, Swanhild herself the only bright and vivid feature of it when the fire had gone down to a sullen smoulder. She was a big woman of twenty, slimly but largely built, with aquiline features, big grey eyes, calm and wide-set, and a wonderful crown of glowing curls, every lock a separate shade of gold, from coppery to that pale tint that suggests warmed silver. She was a typical Hammand of Dannow, evidently a descendant of the Warlock Sir Magnus, for the portrait, the face outlined palely in a black wilderness of background and Tudor cap, and the features traced like rivers on a map, might have been a coarsened likeness of her.

Soon after midnight appeared Walton, the butler, with some trifling enquiry as transparent excuse for a little talk. His manner was one of nicely suppressed alarm.

"Mr. Oliver's very late, Miss Swanhild," he observed uneasily.

"We can trust him not to get into mischief, Walton."

"It's mischief getting at him I dread, Miss Swanhild. Those two Ades are likely to be about their tricks on a night like this."

Swanhild laughed. "They're only poachers, Walton."

"You observed yourself, Miss Swanhild, that fellows who set traps that mauled the poor beasts would be capable of anything. The Ades were always a vengeful lot, a gipsy strain about them, you know, Miss Swanhild. And Charlie Ade owes Mr. Oliver one for that thrashing last month."

"Strictly he owes me one. It was I who sent Oliver round directly I found the traps. Oliver would have been content with jailing him."

"He swore, and so did young Bob, to do for Mr. Oliver when he was out of Lewes, Miss Swanhild."

"Just so, hence my confidence, Walton. They wouldn't dare to do anything after saying it."

"Well, Miss Swanhild, there's no knowing." He hesitated. "As Mr. Oliver went to Lower Dannow it's to be hoped he won't take the short cut back by the Shaw—"

As he was voicing her own unconfessed fear Swanhild was curt. "Don't worry about the Monster," she advised. "Why, it hasn't been about for forty years."

"There's no timing it, Miss Swanhild. Once it was quiet a hundred and twenty years, and then it came up worse than ever—" He glanced involuntarily at the Warlock portrait.

The girl shuddered and abandoned her pretence of indifference. "If one only knew beforehand when it was going to manifest itself!" she sighed.

"If you knew when to expect it, Miss Swanhild, might I venture to ask what you would do?"

"Call in—oh, Doyle, or Professor Lodge, or Miss Bartendale."

"Miss Bartendale, Miss Swanhild? I do not seem to recognize the name. May I ask if we have ever entertained the lady?"

"No, I only know her by reputation. She is the greatest hand at hunting down ghosts and anything supernatural that ever was known. She appears to combine the functions of a White Witch and detective."

Walton shook his head. "It was before your time, Miss Swanhild, but I remember Madame Blavatsky and Professor Crookes coming down after your grandfather's death and failing to find out anything. I doubt, with all respect to your opinion, if this lady, or anyone, could do anything with our Monster."

Swanhild laughed again. "I believe you would be half sorry if anyone could, Walton! It would lower the prestige of the family to lose its old-established Ghost, eh? A supernatural Bane and Luck combined that has gone on for a thousand years at least—"

She stopped suddenly. The door was ajar and from the hall came the noise of the telephone bell. Both the girl and the old man were unreasonably startled. Walton hurried out, and Swanhild followed him after a moment's pause. The hall was poorly lit, and at the further end of it the maid who had been sitting up pending the master's return was at the telephone.

She turned, and across the dusk of the long apartment her face showed with the uncanny luminosity of live flesh in a dim distance. Through the hush her voice came in almost a shriek.

"Oh, Mr. Walton—Miss Hammond.

They've rung us up from the Lodge—the Monster's in the Shaw— Will heard it howl And Mr. Hammand isn't home yet!"

AS SHE ran the length of the hall Swanhild's heart seemed to miss one beat and then she was suddenly very calm. She must be calm, for Oliver's sake. "Hullo, hullo!" came the voice of the lodge-keeper's son as she took the receiver from the frightened maid. "Why don't you call Miss Hammand?"

"It's Miss Hammand. Steady, Will. What's up?"

"The Monster's in the Shaw, Miss. I heard on en. Killin' Mus' Hammand, most like. I heard on en a mile away. Horrible, it were, like a dog an' a devil to onct!"

"How do you know it's the Monster? It might be a trapped dog."

"Miss, I heard en! I were comin' home from Lower Dannow, after gettin' a bottle for father from the doctor, and on the bridge I heard en. Like a bark, an' a voice, an' a woman in 'sterics all together! Wind bein' from the Shaw, miss, an' it carryin' all the way to the bridge! It warn't no dog."

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"Very well, stand ready with a lantern to open the gates when you see a car coming."

Three violent applications to the house telephone brought the voice of the chauffeur, scared and sleepy. " 'Lo! Wha's 'time o' night?" it demanded.

"It's Miss Hammond. Run the Maxwell round, Stredwick. As quick as you can."

She ran upstairs and came down within three minutes, buckling her brother's service revolver on round her motor coat. Walton and the maid, the only servants up at the time, still stood by the telephone, as though paralyzed. "Miss Swan, surely you're not going to the Shaw?" the old man exclaimed.

The horror in his eyes brought home to Swanhild the incredible possibilities of the crisis. As a youth he had seen her own grandfather, Reginald Hammand, brought home from the Shaw after such an alarm as this; living, but with his hair turned partly white in a couple of hours. She could see the picture of it was growing in his mind's eye, and to break the spell of horror motioned him to open the hall door.

The inrush of wind almost took her off her feet. Sudden frost had crisped the ivy round the porch to brittleness; it made an odd undertone in the wind. Before her was the courtyard, all black, the pines across the moat moving their branches fantastically over the girding-wall, the sky overhead tenderly grey, with big, hard winter stars in it. Past the wall showed copses and hangers like so many clumps of hearse-plumes; around in the valley between all a soft mistiness of starlit frost-fog. Beyond the valley the last Northern wave of the Downs humping itself up to the crowning height of Thunderbarrow Beacon. The Monster Shaw, at the foot of the Beacon, plumily dusk above the mist. The summit over the Shaw only to be distinguished from the sky by token of its blocking out some stars and having the Monstrous Man of Dannow sprawled on it.

Dannow Monstrous Man is a giant figure outlined by stripping the turf from the chalk beneath, own brother to the Long Man near Eastbourne and the White Horses of many places in England. In that night of half-light and dull darkness it shone strangely distinct and menacing, looking, as shifting mist-shadows chased over it, like a Titan's ghost pegged down on the hillside and writhing in agony.

Swanhild, in the compulsory pause, in the sounding emptiness of night, knew herself for a feeble atom bound to pit herself against what had baffled the wits and courage of thirty generations. She chafed over the car's delay, but knew it was unavoidable. And every moment was precious. What was happening to Oliver in that dark patch under the Monstrous Man that was the wood where so many Hammands had died hideously? If it was no false alarm, if he had truly fallen into the too tangible clutches of the Monster, then she was probably only going to share his fate—death in a horrible form, or madness that would end in self-destruction.

They had all committed suicide, all the Hammands who encountered the Monster and were not killed by it. Her grandfather and the Warlock Sir Magnus, and Godfrey whom Holbein painted, and many others. And not one had described what he had seen. They just killed themselves, rather than live with the horror of it in their brains. . . . That was the very worst of it—if only one had described what it was—any horror is preferable to that of utter uncertainty.

As she strained eyes and ears for the car's coming, a soft nose was thrust into her hand. "I had forgotten you, Alex," she said, patting the Great Dane that had lounged after her from the hall fire. She would not go utterly alone, after all, though no man within ten miles would have ventured into Thunderbarrow Shaw on a frosty night.

"Miss Swanhild, I can't see a lady of the family run into danger without a man to back her. I'll come." Walton spoke with the explosiveness of desperation. His teeth chattered over the words, he clutched the doorpost as though staggered at his own temerity. He would be less use than hindrance. "No, thanks, Walton," she returned. "It may be a false alarm, and you must mind the house. Just get Mrs. Walton up quietly."

He opened his mouth to protest, but at that moment a dazzling light flowed round the house, to stop, purring, before the steps. Swanhild was down and in almost before it was stationary. The chauffeur jumped out; a ridiculous figure, his livery jacket huddled over the ill-assorted garments he had snatched when awakened.

"It's the Shaw, Thunderbarrow Shaw, Mr. Stredwick!"

The maid called it down—she had an understanding with him. The man's face turned to a mask of panic. "Miss—I can't go!" he quavered to Swanhild. "The Monster's taken a Stredwick already, besides Hammands!"

Swanhild remembered the man's grandfather had been one of the victims whose death in the Shaw had been too horrible for her grandfather to explain or survive. "You'll open the wall gate," she ordered, settling in the driver's seat and calling Alex up beside her. He had it only half open when she guided the car through.

It bumped, thunderously, over the moat-bridge, and shot into the avenue.

THE wind lashed Swanhild's face icily as she put the car to half speed down the clear span of avenue. It glided over the smooth gravel steadily; the splash of white glare from the lamps slipping along the ground in front; tree trunks seeming to scurry past frantically as the light rippled against them in the pitch darkness that brooded under the roof of meeting beech branches. The Lodge was marked by a pink scintillation that was Will's lantern and a flicker of twisted ironwork as the open gates were passed.

Outside, the road curved to the right, beside the park railings, ran high and bleakly parallel to the valley, and dipped to the bridge. So far the wind came to them straight from the Beacon. The girl strained her ears for any unusual sound on it. She heard nothing, but felt the Great Dane start and stiffen beside her. The great creature suddenly dropped down on the cushions, whimpered once, and huddled against her, shuddering. Swanhild's brain crept—Alex, fearless, thoroughbred Alex, was abjectly frightened, with nothing to account for it save that the wind was from the Beacon and animals can sense what human beings cannot. Then the bridge was reached, a turn to the left made, and the car sped along a glimmering ribbon of highway with the wind no longer from the Beacon.

Hedges ran to either hand, fluffily black, dipping to give a glimpse of the rivulet that ran down from the uplands like a flash of dull, meandering lightning. Then came cobbles, rough-cast garden walls to the right, cottages beyond them peaking, unlit, up amongst the stars. To the other hand the misty valley and the uplands beyond sloping to the spectral enormity of the Monstrous Man on the Beacon's dark bulk. The village well past the flanks of the Beacon and another Down-hump swooped together and then opened to show the road rippling, ethereally pale, into the hazy immensity of the Weald.

Swanhild knew Oliver had gone to Mansby Place in Lower Dannow village, round the far curve of the Beacon's base. She had clung to one faint hope; that her brother had merely stayed gossiping with Goddard Covert unreasonably late. Her country-bred eyes could make out the Place, on its hillock, black but for one tiny glimmer towards the top. Oliver was not there. Goddard was up, pottering over his chemicals, but she thanked Heaven the Place was to windward of the Beacon that night. Oliver must have gone by the borstal; the sheep track that ran below the Shaw and through the valley almost to the Manor Lodge. All this went through her mind in the moment it took to turn the car and race back through the gap. A twist to the right sent it slashing and slicing through frozen grass and dead bracken, and so down to the turf-grown Roman cutting through the valley.

It seemed an eternity while she drove principally by instinct and memory into the dull, wet sea of mist in the valley-trough. The car rushed down into it, seemed to stand hummingly still in the smother of it, bumped, and began to climb in free starlight again, the Beacon rising in front, to be drawn up on a grass slope with the fringe of the Shaw not far above it.

Alex had recovered herself; she sniffed towards the wood, but showed no uneasiness. The sounds of a wind-tortured plantation came down full and loud: boughs beaten together creakily, the rustle of bushes and bracken, the swish of lashed grass. A very tornado of dismal noises met Swanhild when she unshipped a lamp and stepped towards the outer fringe of trees. She was hot and cold at the same time, and calm with sheer dread. The Shaw was mainly full of pines, firs and beech, that stretched up funereally, shutting out the dimly lit sky, save where a birch here and there let a few stars glimmer down between bare branches. The noisy, crowded spaciousness would have been terrifying to any solitary wanderer not country-bred, to Swanhild the terror was what might manifest itself at any moment; from the tree-tops, behind or in front or from the very earth.

Alex loped in front, with swaying head. Swanhild called her brother's name at intervals, steeling herself against the dread that her voice might bring other hearers than Oliver. The whole Shaw was like a dark cave, a cave with endless turnings, where anything might lurk. Possibly something that made sane men kill themselves after meeting it. Once an indistinct

sound made her face round, and far away the other lamp was shining on the car.

A turn hid it, breaking the last link with the wholesome outer world, and landed her in a clearing whence several rides branched.

Someone had been there recently. The earth was too frost-bound to hold foot-marks, but crushed grass and snapped fern told the tale. Alex suddenly ran up the nearest path to an oak that stood at one side of another small clearing. She nosed uneasily something on the ground. It was a splash of blood, frozen and slightly opalescent. Swanhild flashed the light round, and on the side of the tree facing the open space was a dark mark, splashed head-high, and at the foot a ghastly huddle of torn flesh.

Swanhild's heart sucked, but this was not Oliver. It was the next worse thing, his dog. A gigantic mastiff; its body looked as large as a pony as it lay there. One hind leg had been torn off, the whole body had been twisted and squeezed to an almost shapeless mass before being flung against the tree. Some diabolic force must have been needed to perform such an atrocity. Alex, after snuffing mournfully at her dead kennel friend, led on again, across the clearing to a curve in the line of trees, where the lightning-struck ruin of a beech stood overshadowed by a large pine. At the pine's foot the light lit on black curls prone on the shuffled brown needles and cones.

It was Oliver, sprawled over the roots with his head in a puddle of blood.

SETTING the lamp down, Swanhild turned him over and propped him against the pine. His face was covered with blood, his hair matted with it; a thick silk muffler round his neck was black and soaked and frozen into folds. All the blood was congealed; it had ceased to flow some time before, though whether from cold or because Oliver had died Swanhild could not tell. The sleeves of his thick overcoat were torn to ribbons and his hands and forearms were black and scarlet and frozen almost stiff. Swanhild could not tell if his heart showed any sign of life, with the beating of her own and the noise around almost deafening her.

She stood up and squared her shoulders. A thicket of brambles and bracken backed the trees, it was torn and broken in a way that indicated a titanic struggle. Nothing could be done there; alive or dead she must get her brother home. Suddenly a little uncertain sound came from the hollow of the burnt beech. Her scalp crept; she stepped before Oliver, listening and staring from the beech to Alex.

The dog lifted and swayed her head uncertainly, sniffing towards the beech, then resumed her watch on Oliver. Swanhild could not see into the tree, a gap to the ground existed but it was round at the other side. There were scores of different sounds on the wind as it poured through boughs and over the hill edge; she could not decide if she had been mistaken. At last: "Come out of that hollow tree or I'll fire!" she ordered, in a scared voice she scarcely knew for her own.

There was no answer, and she fired into the trunk, waist high. Nothing ensued but a shower of rotten wood. The explosion of the revolver seemed to blow aside all other noises for a moment and leave her in a little clear space of silence. No sound came from the tree. She would have been satisfied but for the dog's action. Driven by impulse, almost without conscious volition, she snatched the lamp and ran to flash it in the hollow.

She had not cried out over her brother, but at what the light showed a half-scream of: "Kate Stringer!" seemed to ring in her ears without her knowing she had spoken. The sight was indescribable, the broken mastiff was nothing to it. And the worst was that the torn flesh she could scarcely distinguish from the torn clothing was still alive.

Nothing to be done there. With strength born of desperation she thrust Oliver up the pine-roots until he almost stood, sagging horridly as she propped him, butted a shoulder under one of his arms, and so slung him on her back. He was an enormous man, his feet trailed on the ground and both hands were needed to hold him by the limp arms she pulled round her neck. The butt of the revolver, thrust in the breast of her coat, touched her right hand as she held him. The lamp must be left behind; she turned it with one foot so that the light carried as far as possible along the way she had come. Summoning all her strength she started off, bent nearly double beneath her overwhelming burden.

Alex kept in front of her. The mastiff's body was within the lamp's ray; seeing it she realized afresh what a mark she made, weighed down and in the dark, for whatever had done the night's work. A turn took her beyond the light and a trailing bramble caught her round one ankle like a clutching hand; she jammed Oliver be-

tween herself and a tree while she reached up the foot and found what it was. Her eyes were now adjusted to the dark, she could distinguish Alex for a lighter patch in it as the animal led her over the first clearing, and so, presently, the light of the car hove into sight in a frame of black tree silhouettes. She summoned all her strength and in a last spurt reached the blessed open, between Shaw and car, tumbled her brother on the turf, and sank down beside him, sobbing for breath.

His head rolled over in a hideously limp way when she lifted his shoulders and held him in her arms while she recovered breath, her eyes on the Shaw all the time. So far, good. The Monster never attacked anyone save under pines or firs. Oliver was safe from it for the time. Only she ought to go back for the other victim. She tried to think it over, frantically, in the enforced pause to gather strength. She was almost sure Oliver was dead; but if he were taken to the doctor at once there might be a chance for him. She knew poor Kate in the beech had been just alive—but she might be dead by now. Anyhow, a woman's first duty is to her own menfolk.

Kate was probably dead. Swanhild got up and dragged Oliver into the tonneau, tucked the rugs round him, and ran round the car to crank up. The girl who might be alive—her brother who might be dead. The Monster had not molested her, but if she went in again.... She could come back after taking Oliver home.

Oh, yes, and Oliver might survive—at the expense of a girl's possible chance of living. She dropped the handle and pelted off to the Shaw again, after ordering Alex to stay with Oliver. There were things a Hammand of Dannow could not do, even to save the only brother the war had left her. She charged blindly through the darkness of the unholy wood now, no more conscious of the horror that dark might hold in leash than of the ground under her speeding feet, exalted past fear by plain duty to be done.

Only a thrill of horror had power to come when she reached the beech and was stripping off her coat to wrap and hold together the ghastly thing that was a girl like herself; a girl she had played with years before, had talked and laughed with that past afternoon. A pair of pale blue eyes opened in the mutilated thing that had been the prettiest face in the village, and looked at her a moment before closing again. In a few minutes she was back and had stowed the close wrapped figure beside Oliver. To turn the car it had to be run under the fringe of the Shaw, to a wider turf stretch, and so round to the Roman way. It slowed down the incline and along the mist-filled trough of the valley, bumped, and climbed again.

To Swanhild it seemed a thousand years' stretch of wind that lashed the face like sleet, stars racing backwards, smothering mist, and sounding, empty space with a menacing horror ready to materialize out of the murk, before the car swooped on to cobbles in the safety of the village street.

It was best to head for the Manor. The doctor lived half an hour's run away over the worst roads in Sussex. It was ten minutes' smooth scurry to the now brightly lit lodge. Will was on guard; she called to him to call the doctor at once.

IN THE courtyard Stredwick and Walton, both pale and wide-eyed, got Oliver out of the car and into the hall. Mrs. Walton waited there with the maid, large, composed, capable. She had been a trained nurse before her marriage and her nerves were dependable.

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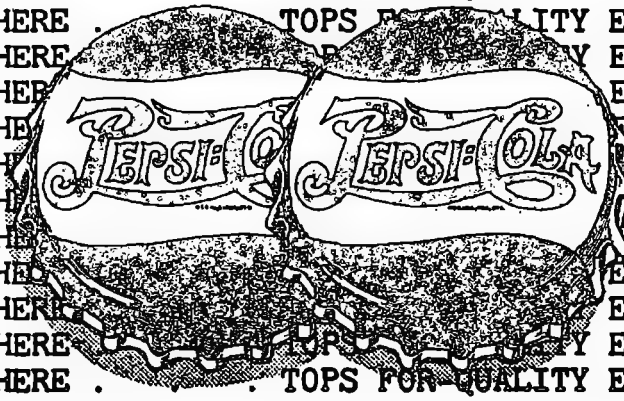


"Put him on that settle," she ordered. Swanhild followed, carrying the girl. Vaguely she reflected that the run must have been a record one, or the cloth between her hands and the tattered body would have been soaked through; then, with a shiver, she recollected that the Monster was a vampire, and a vampire's victims do not bleed much after meeting it. She laid her burden on the other settle.

"A bad knock on the head," pronounced Mrs. Walton, examining Oliver. "The wounds on his face and neck are shallow: his muffler saved him a lot, and the cold must have checked the bleeding. He's beginning to come round; Walton, get some brandy!"

Swanhild felt the room swaying for a moment. Oliver was not dead after all! Mrs. Walton turned to open out the coat that hid the other victim. Even her trained nerves broke at what was revealed. "Good Lord!" she gasped hushedly. "I've never seen the like—and twice I've helped clear the bodies from a wrecked train! Kate Stringer—I didn't know her at first—why, it's like the work of a tiger—a mad and starving tiger! We'll just make her comfortable, Miss Swan, my dear, against the Doctor's coming—"

Here Oliver opened his eyes. They were grey, and they looked diabolically grotesque, pale in the blood-blackened mask that was his face, as they turned about, dim and clouded, from Swanhild to the others. "What—" he began, huskily. Then his gaze found the figure on the other settle, the cloudiness passed away, a stare of utter horror came instead, and before anyone could stop him he sprang to his feet and bent a long look on the mangled girl. "Kate! My heavens, the beast got her after all!" he screamed, and collapsed into Swanhild's arms.

"A plain faint, from shock," Mrs. Walton diagnosed. "You and me, Miss Swan, can manage those wounds. Walton, you and Stredwick carry him to his bedroom."

The telephone bell rang. "From the Lodge, Dr. Newton will come at once," the maid announced.

Before the doctor came Oliver was conscious again. Swanhild was alone with him. He stirred, sighed, and looked round slowly. "Hullo, Swan!" he said, hoarsely. "How did I get here? I thought I was at the Place with old Goddard—" He lifted a bandaged hand and put it to his forehead. "Bandages? And how the deuce did I get into bed?" he said, confusedly.

He was very like his sister, an enormous, black-haired male copy of her, and his eyes were like hers, only now they were clouded. His face had been little injured, but on the left temple was a huge purple swelling.

"I found you in the Shaw and brought you home, dear," Swanhild said hastily.

"But how—I don't remember—after leaving Lower Dannow—" His voice trailed off to an indistinct stop. "How did I—I begin to remember—I fought the Monster—" Raising a bandaged hand to the bruise: "Oh, Swan!" he cried; "Kate—the brute got her!"

Swanhild perched on the side of the bed and laid a cool hand on his burning forehead. "Don't worry, dear old boy," she crooned.

"I'm all right, Swan," he retorted. "She—oh, I saw her!" He almost sobbed. "It must have taken her after I fought it off. It's our Bane—and it's taken a woman! The brute never comes except for one of the family—if I hadn't fought it off it might have taken me and spared her—"

"Oliver, dear," said Swanhild, abruptly, "what was the Monster like?"

He blinked at her. "Oh, I see. You want to jerk a description out of me unawares. For fear—oh, for fear I'd keep it to myself and go mad brooding over it, like—like grandfather and the others. But I don't remember—" Suddenly a red light glimmered at the back of his eyes, as always happened when he was excited or profoundly shocked. "Reggie!" he gasped.

"Oh, Oliver!" cried Swanhild. "You don't mean—you're mad—I *hope* you are mad!"

"I'm not. I mean people will say it," he answered. "It's the first frost since he went west. They'll say in the villages he's returned as a—as a vam— Good Lord, Swan, they'll call him *that*!"

"Hush!" she soothed. "You can put that right with a description of whatever you saw, dear."

"But I did not see anything. At least I can't remember. What's the matter with my head?"

"There's a lump on it; you must have hit the ground there—"

"Jove, that's it!" He pressed his least bandaged hand to his temple. "It feels all squashy. That must be why I can't quite remember—"

DR. NEWTON hurried in; a big-built man, dapper in spite of the midnight call. "You were shouting, Mr. Hammand. That's a good sign at least," he announced. He believed in an optimistic bedside manner.

"I'm all right, Doctor, only sore. I suppose Mrs. Walton's been cauterizing me. What of Kate?"

"Young people are tenacious of life. More I cannot say at present. She can't be moved; Mrs. Walton is preparing a room, Miss Hammand; she did not think it necessary to consult you." While he talked he felt Oliver's pulse and made a quick general examination. "We are doing very well." He nodded to Swanhild. "Nothing but a bit of tying-up left for me to do. Miss Hammand has cauterized you to a turn, it must have hurt her more than it did you! There." He slipped the last safety pin into position. "Let us hear about it."

"It's soon told." Oliver leant back against the pillows, a grotesque figure with his bandaged arms and neck and the bruise splashed over the larger part of his forehead now the swelling had gone down. "I'd been to Mansby Place and was taking the borstal short cut home. When I reached the Shaw I saw something glimmering in it and went in to investigate. Thought it might be some beast setting traps, you know, Swan. It was Kate—she lives with her grandfather in the little cottage at the far end of Lower Dannow, Doctor. She said the old man had been taken very ill, and she was going to the Lodge to ask them to ring you up."

"Very good: Mrs. Walton has rung up Dr. Albury and Nurse Black; when they come we'll send to old Stringer. You met Kate, you say—"

"I told her to nip back to the old chap, and I'd hurry to the Lodge. We'd walked back on her track nearly as far as the burnt beech as we talked, then all of a sudden I felt rotten." He put his hand to the bruise again, and hesitated. The Doctor, who had been mixing something in a glass while he talked, handed it to him. He drank the contents mechanically. Swanhild noted the scent of laudanum. "All at once," he resumed, "I felt rotten. Not ill, you know, but simply—oh, putrid! Kate screamed, it sounded awful in the dark; and I knew something was coming. Coming on me from all sides at once. My brain went round. All in the dark but for a bit of starlight, with my tyke rubbing against me. And, Swan, the worst of it was I didn't feel utterly strange. As sure as I knew it was the Monster coming I knew I'd been through it before."

"Yes, dear," she assented.

He flared up irritably. "You needn't talk as though I were a scared kid or a lunatic, Swanhild. Only it *was* queer, it didn't feel novel to me. Stars, and pines, and cold, and the Monster coming. I couldn't get away from it, it came from all round and closed on me like—oh, like the blast from furnace doors opening all around me. All round and above, and under me. And the air from them sweeping right through me. But it wasn't hot; only horrible. Horrible. Then Holder started to whimper, and my hair fairly rose. He didn't challenge at all, just began to whimper. A thoroughbred whimpering without warning could only mean something bestial.

"I seemed to know that what was coming would be the end of me, soul as well as body. If I didn't fight it, it would annihilate me. Soul and body. I heard myself calling to God for help—out loud. That'll tell you how I felt. Then it closed on me, Kate screamed somewhere, and Holder screamed too. He absolutely screamed, I tell you, Doctor. A mastiff! Then I was fighting it. Fighting it anyhow, in a darkness that went red. All red dark until a splash of fire split it up and put it out. Put the red out and left proper black darkness. That must have been when I pitched on my head. Then I opened my eyes again in light, and saw the hall, and saw you, Swan, and oh, I saw Kate!"

He put his arm over his face and groaned. "Where's Holder?" he asked, noting Alex, who was standing with her forepaws on the bed eyeing him sympathetically.

"Dead." Swanhild thought brevity was best.

Oliver started up. "Holder dead?"

"He died helping you against the Monster, Oliver. It must have got Kate first, and you and he must have drawn it away. Why, it was a death a gallant dog might pray for!"

"If I hadn't fought it off it might have spared him and Kate too. I believe it went for me first." His voice was getting indistinct. On the verge of sleep he suddenly roused. "Why, Swanhild, you're the next! The only Hammand left, beside me! Whenever it appears the Monster will complete its sacrifice—if I die you'll be the Head!" He was in a frenzy of horror that overpowered the opiate temporarily. "Swan, promise me this: whether I live or die, go mad or stay sane, you'll have this investigated at once."

"I will, Oliver."

"You'll get Lodge, or the S.P.R., or that—that lady the Kynastons had."

"On my word of honour, Oliver."

"Blavatsky and Crookes failed over

grandfather, but people have found a lot more out since then." For a few minutes he was awake, a man thinking for the woman dependent on him. "I can't rest, alive or dead, unless you promise to have the investigation as soon as it is daylight. Whether I'm alive or dead, mad or sane."

"I promise, Oliver. As soon as it is day. On my honour."

"Ah," he sighed and fell back as though exhausted. "You're next Chief of Hammands—inherit the Curse—get Lodge, or the lady the Kynastons had—on your word of hon—"

His voice trailed into silence, and he slept.

THE hours that followed were a reminiscent nightmare to Swanhild. A dreaming-over of the time when all efforts failed to save her elder brother some months before. The same reek of drugs and hushed bustle, the same horror of too much white linen overflowing everywhere. Everyone was needed, the Waltons, the other indoor servants, Swanhild herself and the second doctor and trained nurse when they arrived. The medicos had to be helped, one despatched to old Stringer, Oliver watched, a thousand things done for the other victim.

The smallest hours were well past before the full difficulty of the situation really dawned on Swanhild. The first exaltation of hurried action over, she waited in the Holbein room and the grotesque horror of it all became evident. Oliver was safe at home, his injuries were severe but superficial, but if he remembered fully what he had seen that night, madness and suicide would be inevitable. She must do something. Something that thirty generations had failed to do. Find out what the Monster really was.

It was a desperate project, and it did not follow that finding out the secret would mean finding salvation for Oliver. What could this thousand-year-old horror be, anyhow? Why had it not attacked her? Had it left the Shaw before she reached it? Where had it gone, then? Where had it come from? No trace of it had been found after any of the previous tragedies. There was only one thing to be done, and she embarked on it by consulting the Post Office London Directory.

The door opened and Dr. Newton entered. She stared up at him dumbly. He nodded: "The verdict: joint verdict of Albury and myself, is that your brother has rallied splendidly, my dear Miss Hammand. His pulse is normal, and he is sleeping healthily under my opiate. The wounds should do well, also, thanks to your promptitude in bringing him in and cauterizing them. Exposure might have finished him."

"What of the girl?"

"It is also thanks to your promptitude that she has a chance of life. Very microscopic, but still a chance. She can't be moved; I should like to call in a specialist."

"I give you *carte blanche*, of course, Doctor. What of Oliver's mind?"

"I cannot tell until he wakes. However, it seems unaffected except in the matter of his not remembering what happened immediately before that knock on the head."

"Does the blow account for his partial loss of memory?"

"Can't say off-hand. The bone is not disturbed, and after a good sleep his memory may be perfect again."

"He may wake with his memory restored?"

"Possibly, possibly not."

"In the latter case, may it return later?"

"That is also a possibility. I shall advise you if it becomes necessary to call in a mental specialist."

"A mental specialist will be no use if he remembers what he saw in the Shaw," returned Swanhild, bitterly.

"Now, now, my dear Miss Hammand!" the doctor chided. "Nothing I have seen this night is due to any but a material cause."

She reminded herself he had only bought the local practise when her grandfather's death was becoming a legend, and merely asked: "Well, what sort of creature made the wounds?"

"That is the one uncertain point. They are so ferociously torn and mauled that no mark is distinct enough to indicate what made them. It is fair season, however; a half-starved beast may have escaped from some show. I've warned the Dannow constable. Also, Walton has been telling me that those two Ades have been threatening your brother lately. They own three peculiarly large and vicious curs; if the masters attacked Hammand the dogs might have attended to anyone else who had the bad luck to be present. I hope, Miss Hammand, that our patient will wake in a fit state to laugh at his fancies of the night. By the way, what is the rhyme about the alleged Monster? I might as well know just what he fancies."

"It is I who fancy he may kill himself,

if he remembers what he saw in the Shaw," returned Swanhild, defensively. "This is the correct version of our family rhyme:

'Dannow Monster, do ye wit,
With the race is firmly knit.
While the Monster is alive
Hammand's race shall live and thrive.
If it die; if die it may;
Hammand's race shall fade away.
Who its monstrousness espieth
God grant grace that swift he dieth!
Whoso, spying, dieth not,
Worse than death shall be his lot!'"

"H'm. What does the last line mean?" asked the doctor.

"That any Hammand who sees the Monster and is not killed by it will pine away through horror, or commit suicide. *They* did, both of them."

Swanhild indicated the Streete and Holbein defiantly. The doctor pursed his lips. "It is centuries since those ancestors of yours met their fate, my dear Miss Hammand, plenty of time for traditions to grow around them."

"My grandfather met a similar fate in 1890," she returned. "We have the *Times* of October 10 in that year, with an account of the inquest."

He frowned at her thoughtfully. "I seem to have read it some time or other. There was some mention of a legend accounting for it. That every now and then one of you Hammands must be sacrificed to the Devil, who claims his prey in a pine wood on frosty, starlit nights, in the shape of something called the Undying Monster."

Swanhild nodded. "That's one of the traditions. Only it has to be the Head of the family who is sacrificed. As long as the Monster lives to take his toll so long shall we hold Dannow."

"And that's the idea your brother has in his head? No wonder he was upset! My dear Miss Hammand, you are upset yourself; and no wonder, after your exertions of the night. By daylight you will be yourself again, and the police will probably bring round the body of the escaped animal that did the very material damage to your brother and the girl. Now I must go back to my patients."

WHEN he had gone Swanhild turned to the directory and made out a little list of names and addresses. She looked up again as the door was opened. "Goddard!" she exclaimed.

"Swanhild!" the newcomer responded, in a voice wherein reproach, relief and horror were blended. He was a tall and thin young man, a few years her senior, with a lean face, bright brown eyes, dark hair, and a humorous mouth. He was dressed in tweeds thrown on anyhow, a tweed cap squashed down on his head, and a motor lamp swinging in the gloved hand at the end of his left arm; hand and arm being expensive substitutes for the original limb.

From his face Swanhild's eyes travelled to the lamp. "Yes," said Goddard Covert, severely. "It's your Maxwell's starboard light."

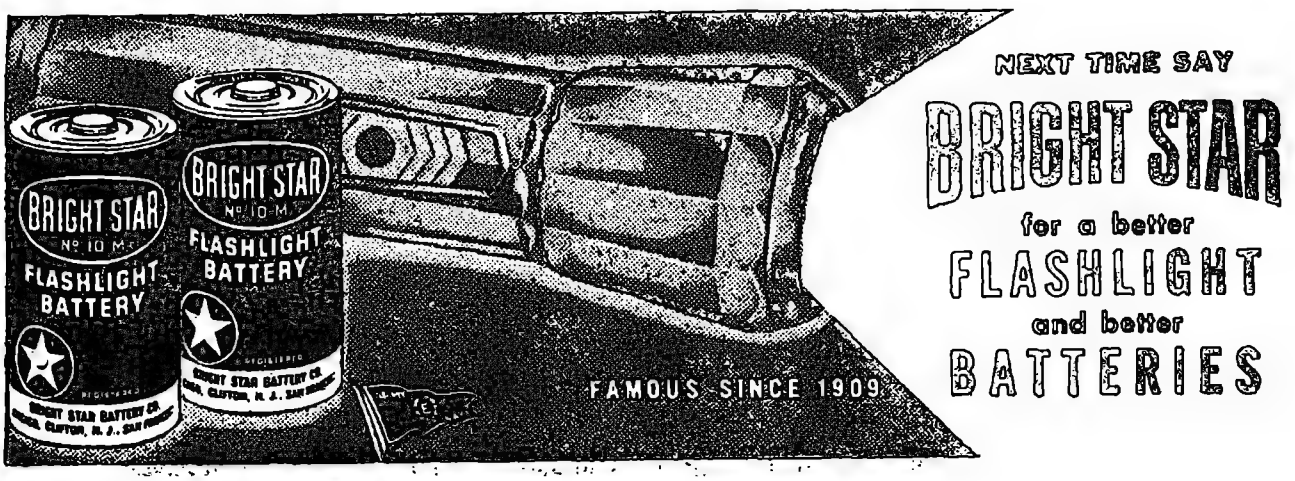
"Oh, Goddard! You've been in the Shaw!"

"Oh, Swanhild, you never called me when you went in the Shaw!"

"Your wire is out of order, you know," she excused.

"You were glad it was," he retorted. "I was restless early, saw this burning in the Shaw, and went to investigate. And, oh, Swanhild! I saw the dog!"

He had set the lamp down and held her hands bunched together in his while they talked. "You in the Shaw—during frost—and after *that*—oh, Swanhild!" he went on, reproachfully. "Walton has told me all."



He became aware of the cap, and pulled it off. "I *was* upset," he observed, staring at it.

"You went into the Shaw!" she exclaimed again.

"It was safe—drizzling by that time. Swan, my dear, what are we to do?"

His acceptance of the Monster as a fact was bracing after the doctor's incredulity. Very briefly she gave him an account of her night's experience. "It didn't attack you," he said, at the end. "But, Oliver; since he's alive and sane what do you fear exactly?"

"That the sacrifice will be completed. Whenever the Monster has manifested itself the life of the Hammand attacked has paid the penalty, either at its hands or later on. If Oliver remembers what he saw in the Shaw he will be sure to—to do what grandfather did."

Goddard nodded gravely. "You have an idea, Swan."

"He may never remember; he may wake with his memory restored; or he may suddenly have it restored later. That's what I dread. If it comes directly he wakes I shall be with him, and Mrs. Walton, and we can do what we think is right. But we can't keep him under observation for the rest of his life, and if he remembered suddenly—"

She faltered. "I see," Goddard returned. "The shock of sudden remembrance might throw him off his balance. Well?"

"I'm going to try and find out what the Monster is. If we could do it before he remembers and explained it quietly to him the shock would be much lessened."

"Exactly. How do you purpose to find out?"

Swanhild indicated the directory. "I've been looking up the S.P.R. and Miss Bartendale. She's not in it, though."

"Miss Bartendale? I seem to remember the name."

"Lady Grace Kynaston told me about her. There was something wrong in the family last year. Nobody knows just what it was, but they say the family vault at Stoke Kynaston Church had to be hermetically sealed. Miss Bartendale succeeded when the S.P.R. failed. Unfortunately Lady Grace is abroad now, and she only mentioned that Miss Bartendale lives in London. Her name is not in the book, but she may live with her family, so I've made a list of all the Bartendales in town; eleven in all."

"What do you propose to do with that list?"

"Call on all, if Oliver can be left."

"It's rather a tribe to tackle." Goddard wrinkled his forehead up as though trying to remember something. "Bartendale, Bar-ten-dale," he repeated mumblingly. Swanhild crossed the room and opened the window facing north. The wind slashed in, with some rain on it, they looked over the dusky country to the Monstrous Man sprawling in the now overcast sky in what light came through the cloud gaps, and the blur beneath him that was the Shaw.

"It's so grotesque!" the girl broke out. "Oliver is safe and sane so far, yet if we cannot find out this mystery that has been unsolved a thousand years he will go mad and—"

She could not complete it. Instead she cried: "I'm a coward, Goddard! A beastly coward—only Oliver's all I've got left! The doctors said he could not live when he was sent home with Reggie, and I made him live—and now it might have been better if I had let him die decently—"

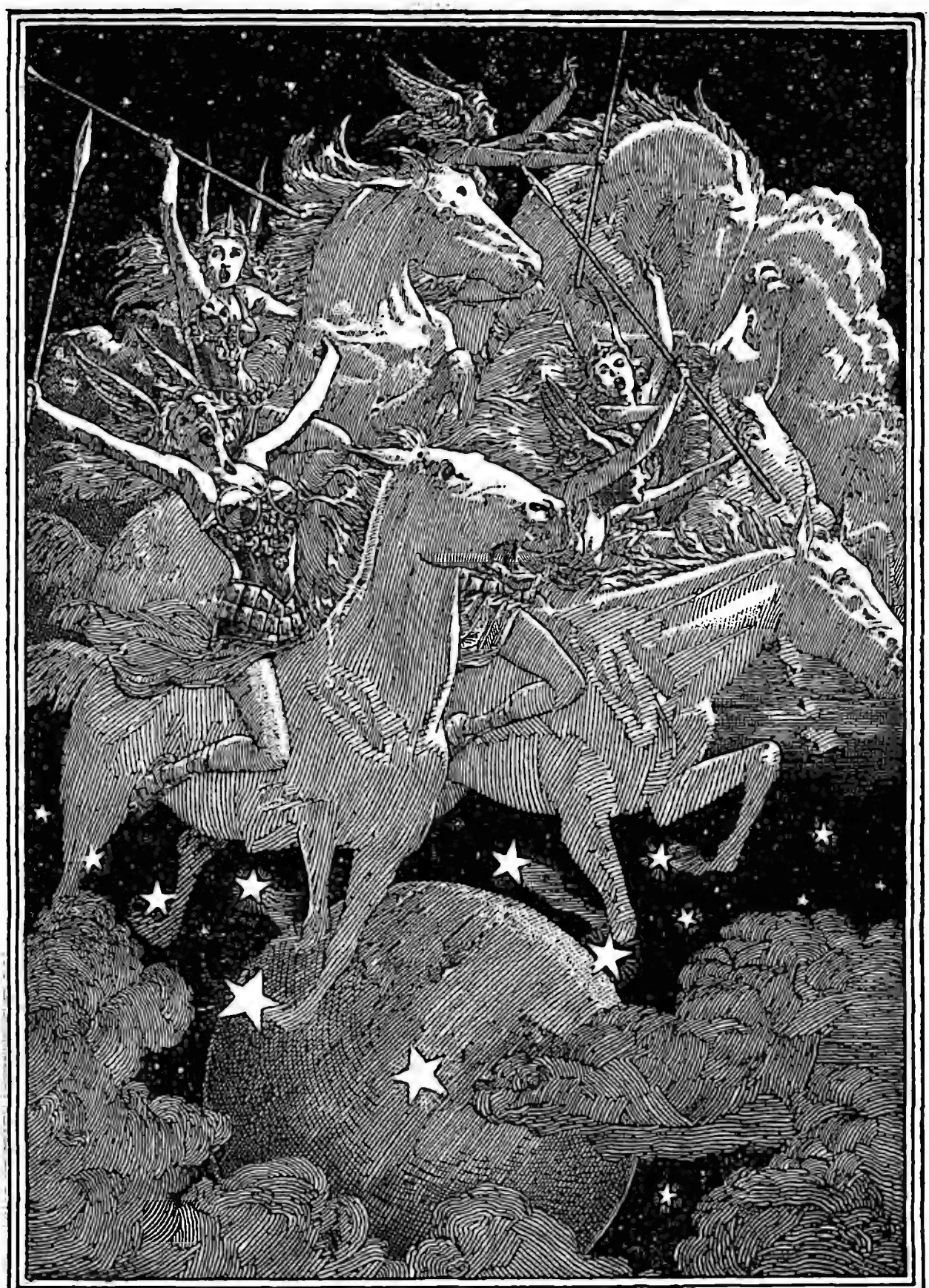
"Hush, Swan, my dear!" Goddard's pleasant light tenor was commanding. "It's the dismal small hours, by daylight you'll be your plucky old self again, ready to fight for old Oliver once more—"

"How can we fight it? This incredible unseen thing—"

"Steady, dear!" It was a crooning protest, like a woman's way with another woman. Briskly he went on: "It reminds me of a couple of years ago. Stuck in a trench dug in packed nastiness, with no way of reckoning when, how, or from where annihilation might descend on you. The only way to be any good was to keep quiet and alert—and not look too far ahead. At present we will look no further than the prospect of the impending Witch-Hunt. And, Swanhild, it wasn't true, wasn't absolutely nice, was it?—saying Oliver's all you've got left? I thought we understood one another ages ago."

He looked good-humoured reproach down into her eyes. It seemed to her, in that little pause after hours of frantic hurry, that the world stood still for a moment and there was nothing alive in the universe save the two of them, man and woman, in the hushed room with wind-swept dark outside stretching to Infinity's measureless void.

"It just shows how you love old Oliver," Goddard said, tenderly. He took her in his arms, kissed her very gently and held her close a minute. It was almost as Oliver had done on the night when the elder brother died and he became the only



The Ride of the Valkyrs.

kin left to her. With the wakened memory of that the horror of the Monster closed down on her again, but with someone to share it, it was not so paralyzing as before, though she cried out:

"But you're not the only one! Oliver's still here!"

He held her at arm's length. "Exactly. Oliver's still on this nice old globe, and it's up to us to keep him there, safe and sane, please God! And I gather the sooner we get an investigator down the more chance we have of doing it."

CHAPTER II

MORE DIMENSIONS THAN FOUR

IT WAS the chilly, still hour before day when Swanhild came down again half an hour later. The deadly hush that had settled on the big house after the hours of scurry gave a shivering impression of a dead and hollow world. A nurse flitting across the hall and the subdued reek of iodoform explained it too well.

In the Holbein room, however, lights and a fire waited, Alex and divers other dogs shared the rug with several cats, and Goddard and Mrs. Walton were holding a not uncheerful consultation beside a table laid for two.

"I've taken the liberty of ordering the Mercedes round, Swanhild," said Goddard. "Mrs. Walton agrees with me that a couple of hours' spin will do you good."

"A run—now?" said Swanhild.

"Exactly," put in Mrs. Walton. "I can take charge of the house for that time."

"It's really a sporting effort to get Miss Bartendale, of Kynaston Vault celebrity, on the spot within two hours," Goddard explained. "Don't hope too much, but there's a microscopic chance you may see her and ascertain if she can and will help us within an hour.

"I have just remembered that somebody told me yesterday Miss Bartendale was seen taking the air, with other tepidly distinguished folk, on Brighton front the day before."

"You know where she's staying?" gasped Swanhild.

"No, but it's easier to find a notable visitor to Brighton than a regular Londoner who isn't in the directory."

Then Swanhild hurried with her breakfast, and once in the driver's seat of the big car the growing uneasiness that had been coming to her began to abate.

As they came near their destination, excitement drove away all other feelings.

At the eighth Brighton hostelry that they visited in vain, a clerk presented Goddard with a spare Visitors' List, and they consulted its smudgy columns under a lamp.

"Eureka!" chuckled Goddard. "See—'Hesse House, Hesse Square. Thursday. Lady Adams, Miss L. Bartendale.' We must hark westward again, but first up Ship Street to the post office and a phone."

In the Post Office Swanhild soon found the number of Hesse House, and the voice of a well-trained maid-servant made reply. Miss Bartendale was there, she was up; preparing to take the early train to town. What name, please? Would Miss Hammand kindly hold the wire?

In a minute another voice came. "Hallo! I'm Luna Bartendale. I suppose the Monster has manifested itself again, Miss Hammand?"

Swanhild quite jumped. "Yes. Why?"

"My dear girl (you are a girl by your voice) when a Hammand of Dannow Old Manor rings up a total stranger who happens to be a Sensitive the inference is fairly evident!" The voice was a light soprano, the kind that does not make much noise but carries a long way. "The Monster's in all the Haunted Houses books and County Guides," it added. "When did it appear?"

"A few hours ago—" Swanhild put the night's doings in a few sentences. At the conclusion: "And what am I to do?" asked the soprano.

"You helped Lady Grace Kynaston last year—"

"The Stoke Kynaston affair was not a thousand years old. Don't hope too much, Miss Hammand, but I am at your service as far as my powers go. Where are you?"

"The Ship Street Post Office. I motored over with Mr. Covert, to try and find you, as I mentioned. I cannot thank you enough—"

"We'll take all that as said, dear girl. Is there any chance of my examining this Thunderbarrow Shaw before the police and sightseers trample it up?"

"Nobody, even our local constable, will venture in before full daylight. We can get you there in an hour."

"Very good. Come round here slowly, and I shall be ready for you. *Au revoir.*"

"She's coming and she sounds nice," was all Swanhild could say to Goddard at first. He exchanged into the driver's seat and she told him all the conversation while they travelled slowly westward.

Hesse Square is one of the cluster of aristocratically named streets, aggressively redolent of when they were not mainly devoted to the boarding business, in the southwest corner of Brighton. A haunt of hushed dullness on sunshiny days; deadly in the winter dawn as the car drew up between the funereal trees of the central enclosure and the light-spattered cliff that was Hesse House. "Jove, just the place for a witch!" said Goddard.

Swanhild had barely stepped to the pavement when the door opened and a little woman and big dog came down the steps. "Miss Hammand?" said the voice that had come over the telephone, and the owner stopped and held out a hand. The advantage of the steps brought her face level with Swanhild's. And it was a very charming face.

Her pretty hair was of that fine pale golden tint that so rarely survives childhood, and her features were so delicate that only eyebrows much darker than her hair and the pronounced cheekbones and high bridged nose saved the ensemble from dollishness. Her skin was creamy, touched with pink on either cheek and with a sharp-cut splash of red at the lips, her daintily rounded chin had a deep dimple in it, and she kept her lids habitually drooped so that her eyes flickered darkly behind a screen of golden lashes. She was slightly built, carried herself very upright, and was muffled in a voluminous coat of the heavy woollen stuff humane women wear in place of furs.

Swanhild took it all in in the moment it took her to stammer: "Miss Bartendale? The White Witch?"

"The Supersensitive," the other corrected. The hard red lips curved in a smile. "I'm older than I look," she supplemented, answering the girl's thought. "I am so thankful I don't 'look my job.'"

She canted her head to look at Swanhild fairly, and raised her lids. It was like an electric shock. Swanhild stared into blue-grey eyes of a lightness that seemed almost transparent, like ice in shade, diamond-bright, and so searching that she instinctively felt glad she had nothing on her conscience to conceal. The lids drooped again, and: "You'll take my word I'm It—myself?" Luna Bartendale said. Then, looking at Goddard: "Mr. Covert, to whom I owe the chance of inspecting the Shaw at once? We'll take the introductions as accomplished, and you'll drive, please, while Miss Hammand posts me in necessary details. I see my dog approves you both. That'll do, Smith, thanks. Pray don't forget the wire to my aunt."

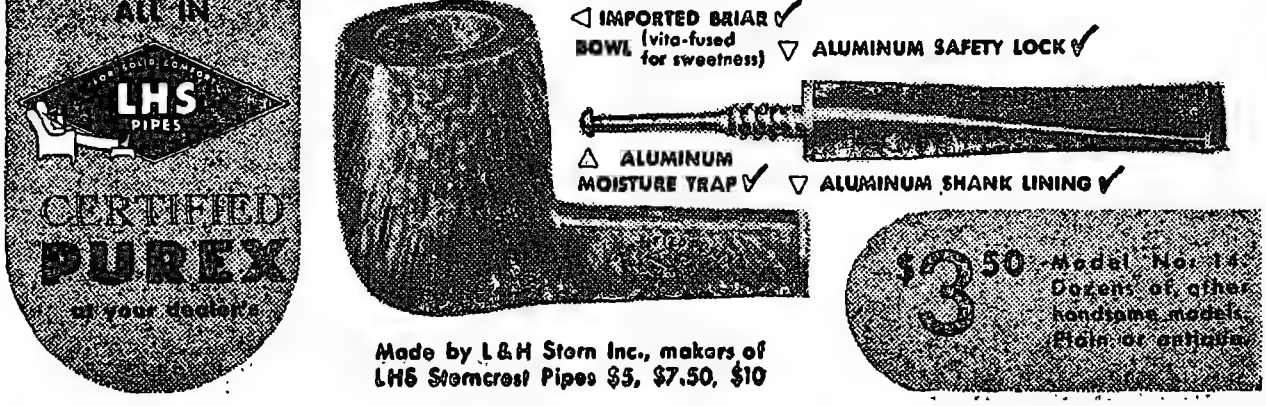
She settled herself comfortably beside Swanhild with her feet on the dog; a creature of indeterminate breed with touches of Dalmatian and bloodhound; and took a little leather bag from the maid who had followed her. In a minute the car was on its way again.

MISS BARTENDALE nestled in her corner and smiled at Swanhild. "You've got an *idée fixe* that I can help you, and now you've caught me you are bewildered with relief," she observed, casually.

Swanhild stammered: "I wasn't sure you'd come—and at this hour—"

"Bless you, I'm used to being rung up at unseemly times. I was quite relieved when you rang me up; I'd just finished breakfast, and breakfast alone by gaslight is about as ghastly as champagne in daylight. Now, please tell me your brother's account of what happened in the Shaw."

Swanhild repeated it, as they sped through the misty dullness. "Ve-ry curious," said the Super-sensitive. Swanhild


YOU GET THEM ALL IN
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CERTIFIED PUREX
at your dealer's
Check List of Pipe Value
IMPORTED BRIAR BOWL (vita-fused for sweetness)
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had learnt by then that she always spoke with a kind of little patronizing drawl, and her voice grew fascinating with longer acquaintance and had a caressing suggestion of a northern burr in it. "Don't you notice something queer in it, Miss Hammand?"

"It was very confused—queer all through."

"Yes; still, one point is concretely odd. But he may have omitted to mention what— We'll hear what he has to say. Now for the Monster's history. Like everyone who has ever read a book about ghosts I am acquainted with the main details. Briefly, the family of Hammand of Dannow is said to be haunted by an apparition known as the Undying Monster. At different times members of the family have died mysteriously, and their deaths have been attributed to a meeting with the Monster. That, stripped of all details, is the matter in a nutshell, I believe. When did it last appear?"

"Nearly thirty years ago, in 1890. It killed my grandfather and two other people."

"I'll trouble you for full details."

"Well—" Swanhild hesitated, then plunged in boldly. "Grandfather had no business to be meeting a lady from the Mansby Place house party in the Shaw. I don't suppose there was any real harm, but he was married and so was she. And it seems a gamekeeper, our chauffeur's grandfather, was spying on them. Anyhow the man and the lady were killed in a horrible way; as the Monster's victims always are killed: all torn, just as poor Kate was last night, and—and with pieces gone from them. Like Kate.

"Three dogs were there, grandfather's big spaniels and the keeper's lurcher, and they were torn to bits, but not—not eaten. When search was made the bodies were found near Thunder's Barrow, beyond the Shaw, and grandfather was wandering about, horribly mangled, but alive with his hair gone partly white. He refused to say what he had seen, and shot himself next day. Now you know what I fear for Oliver. If he recovers his memory of what he saw, he will kill himself."

Luna Bartendale patted her hand gently. "My dear girl, I fail to see why he should do such a thing."

"Because everyone who escaped alive from the Monster invariably killed himself later."

"But, why?"

"Because they have learnt what the Monster is, and the knowledge is so horrible that they chose death rather than to live with it on their minds."

"But what is it like?"

"Nobody knows. I told you they refused, like grandfather, to describe it."

"We must hear some of the other cases. First, though, Dannow is one of the oldest inhabited houses in England, is it not?"

"The hall has some of the lath and plaster work of the original Saxon manor house incorporated in the walls behind the panelling."

"And how long has your family owned the place?"

"Since it was built."

"And the Monster has been haunting it all the time? How far do your written records go?"

"We have a deed sealed by Canute confirming Reginald, Hammand's son, in the manor."

"And what's the earliest record of the Monster's appearing?"

"There's a pedigree, drawn up in 1650 from older documents, with all its appearances to that date marked in red ink against the names of the victims, and another continuing the record to 1890."

"Can you give some details of a few of the appearances?"

"There's a Crusader effigy in our church, at Dannow, with a lump of a figure at the feet that's supposed to represent the Monster. By the 1650 pedigree this monument is to Sir Oliver Hammand, who met the Monster, lived, and drowned recollection of it by getting himself killed in the First Crusade. And there's a brass to Godfrey Hammand, dated 1387, with a queer beast under his feet. He met the Monster and spent the rest of his life in prayer and penance, turning Anchorite and living in a little cell built up against the church till his death. Those are the only two people who met the Monster and did not kill themselves afterwards. And you know, going crusading or turning Anchorite was a sort of suicide."

"Did they leave any account of what the Monster looks like? No? And yet they put portraits of it in a public place! What are those beasts like?"

"Impossible to tell. The effigy's nearly shapeless now, and the brass has been scratched and defaced badly."

"Did anyone, other than a Hammand, meet it and live to describe it?"

"None but Hammands have ever survived a meeting with it; other people were all killed or died of fright."

"This girl—Kate Stringer. She has survived."

"The doctors don't think she will last long."

"There's a rhyme about the Monster. Please let me hear it."

Swanhild repeated it. "Curious," commented Luna. "'While the Monster is alive, Hammand's race shall live and thrive.' It suggests that the thing is a Luck as well as a Bane. That brings us to the legends that account for it. You will know that a number of stories are in circulation that never find their way into print owing to our excellent law of libel. One is that a Hammand's life must be sacrificed every now and then to keep that Monster alive?"

Swanhild frowned and nodded curtly. Luna went on. "It is said that Dannow contains a hidden room whose situation and contents are only revealed to the heir presumptive, under seal of secrecy, on his twenty-first birthday; and it is averred that the secret contained in it is so fearful that no one has every betrayed it."

SWANHILD seemed inclined to interrupt, the Supersensitive held up a checking hand. "I'm stating it badly. One popular tradition is that the first Hammand made a compact with the devil, selling his own soul on condition that his heirs should hold Dannow till the Day of Judgment, and that he should live that time to see the bargain carried out. He therefore still lives in the secret room, and at intervals issues forth to make the sacrifice of a human life in order to prolong his own. In short, the Undying Monster is your first ancestor, who perpetuates his unholy existence by swallowing the blood of at least one live human being. And one of the victims at least must be a Hammand."

"Yes, that's the most popular tale," Swanhild agreed. "It is also said that this thousand-year-old ancestor of mine has grown so incredibly revolting in appearance that the mere memory of it makes anyone he doesn't kill commit suicide later. But I can tell you one thing for certain, Miss Bartendale, there's no real secret room at all. I've often been in the room in question myself."

"There's another tale—that every now and then a creature half-human and half-animal is born in the line and kept hidden away somewhere in the Manor till it dies. A creature which occasionally gets loose with sinister results to whomever it meets—"

Swanhild interrupted hotly. "As a member of the family—"

"My dear girl, these tales were merely invented to titillate the love of nastiness ingrained in the common herd, before a too-free press arose to cater to it daily. Still, traditions exist. Isn't there another one?"

"The worst!" Swanhild exclaimed indignantly. "That we Hammands have a vampire strain in us, and if one of us is killed prematurely he—or she—will turn vampire and come back to Dannow, and—"

She stopped, shivering with indignation.

"Well?" Luna prompted.

"People will say it was Reggie!" Swanhild broke out wretchedly. "My elder brother—who—who died three months ago."

"Three months ago! The delay—"

"This is the first frost since he went west. And it is only in frost and starlight they can appear. You may not believe me, Miss Bartendale, but in our district people will say it. Why, after grandfather's death it was said it was his young daughter who —who killed the keeper and lady. She had been killed out hunting the autumn before. They say it accounted for grandfather's refusal to state what he saw, and for his hair going white, and his suicide."

Miss Bartendale lifted her eyebrows gently. In the overcast morning light her eyes were suddenly all pupil, like a white cat's in twilight. "I have a fairly extensive knowledge of what people can believe," she replied sedately. "In my native Ribblesdale an animal is still drowned in the river every seventh year to placate a ghost named Peg O'Nell. Of course this nonsense will worry your brother."

"Oliver broods over things so," exclaimed Swanhild. "You see, our father died early in the war, mother didn't survive him long, and both the brothers were sent home last year, and the doctors said neither could live. Reggie went this summer, but I simply could not let Oliver go. He was quite well and strong by now—and I wish I had not saved him—for this!"

"Hush, my dear girl!" Luna's voice was gentle. "We're all in the same boat now. An aunt is the only blood relative the last few years have left me."

"Oh," said Swanhild, ashamed. Dropping her voice she whispered: "And there's Goddard, Mr. Covert, he's all alone. I don't know why I let myself go like this —to a stranger!" she wound up.

"Because I have come to try and help you, and you trust me, and I must know

everything about you if I am to be of use," Luna made prompt reply. "Now, does the Monster invariably manifest itself in this Shaw?"

Swanhild was herself again, and replied quietly: "No; there are two heart-brasses in our church, to Oliver Hammand, the Anchorite's father, and his daughter. They were killed by it when on pilgrimage to Rocamadour. Godfrey was there when they met it, but survived and turned Anchorite, as I told you."

"It is very curious and unusual, the connection between the Monster and frosty weather."

"It's described in another rhyme," said Swanhild.

"'Where grow pines and firs amain,
Under stars, sans heat or rain,
Chief of Hammand, 'ware thy Bane!'

"Meaning that the Monster can only attack the head of the family on frosty nights near pines and firs."

"In short, the thing's a sort of curse attached to the ownership of the place? Does it only appear out of doors, then?"

"Once it manifested itself in the house, to Sir Magnus the Warlock, the Anchorite's grandson."

"Eh? I seem to remember the name. Isn't Magnus Hammand the Warlock the hero of a fairly presentable tradition?"

"He practiced black art in the hidden room, which has pines outside the window. The tale is that he raised the Monster to help him with his studies, and it got out of his control and killed his little son in the hidden room."

Luna seemed to wake and prick her ears.

"A widespread tale," she commented. "It is also related, with differences, in connection with St. Dunstan and Friar Bacon. What became of the Warlock?"

"Oh, his wife saw the Monster kill and eat the child, and died of shock on the spot, and he committed suicide from horror."

"And to what extent did he practise black art?"

"Some say he sold his soul to Satan, and used to hold black masses in the hidden room, and sacrifice children. Oh, all sorts of utterly odious stuff! That he fed the Monster with live babies is the least disgusting. His ghost that helps other dead Hammands to become vampires; others that the Monster lives on in the hidden room."

THE Supersensitive seemed to fall into reverie, fingering the dimple on her chin absently. "The main point is: however they vary, all traditions agree in connecting the Monster equally with the place and the family. Now what's at the bottom of it all? There's no smoke without fire, and few legends without a substructure of truth. You have mentioned a secret room, Miss Hammand."

Swanhild almost laughed. "You shall see the hidden room. We only keep it to ourselves because we don't want people tramping all over it and disturbing the things."

"What things?"

"The books and crockery the Warlock left there. It was his laboratory, and when he died he said the secret of the Monster would be found in it."

At this Luna opened her eyes wide. "He said that four centuries ago, and the secret has not been found out yet? Am I to understand the room has been kept as he left it four hundred years?"

"Yes, except when Cromwell's men went over the house and stole or broke a lot of things. They may have removed or destroyed the clue; Madame Blavatsky and Sir William Crookes thought so. They were called in after grandfather's death."

"Yet you hope I may be more successful?"

"Knowledge has advanced since then?" Swanhild said it tentatively.

"It has," returned Luna with emphasis. "Blavatsky was a Sensitive, but I'm a Supersensitive."

"What does that mean?" asked Swanhild.

"That in the Shaw I may be able to trace the way the Monster came and went, by means of my cultivated Sixth Sense."

"What is that Sixth Sense?"

"One you've got yourself, dear girl."

"How do you know?"

"Because every normally decent person has it. You sometimes distrust people intensely, without concrete reason, don't you—and afterwards find out they are undersirables?"

"That's only instinct."

"It's the sense of harmony in life. The normal rhythm of existence comprehends all that is true, kindly, and cleanly. Anything that errs against that rule, be it mental, moral or physical, jars on the rhythm, causes a break in the harmony which is perceived by the Sixth Sense. Bad thoughts, a sensual nature, a body to which death has come by violence; all

these equally outrage the orderly harmony of existence.

"All people have this instinctive sense, so long as they keep themselves decent, but in some it amounts to a gift; like an eye for colour or ear for music; and it can be cultivated like other gifts. 'Sensitive' is the name for such individuals. If anything out of the ordinary course of nature —anything belonging to the Fourth Dimension which is commonly called the Supernatural—went through the Shaw on the night I should be able to trace its tracks. If it *was* Fourth Dimensional," the Supersensitive added. "Your dog called your attention to nothing but your brother and the girl?"

"Yes; she was quite satisfied when both were brought out."

"And this is the point I noted in your brother's narrative as you have reported it. Mr. Hammand's dog did not warn him of the approach of his assailant."

"Jove!" Goddard, who had been driving silently so far, twisted his head round for a second. "I didn't notice that. Of course, though, Oliver wasn't his bright young self when he handed out the tale, and he may have omitted to mention no end of details."

"That's possible." Luna lasped into thoughtful silence again.

Swanhild hinted anxiously: "Have you come to some conclusion?"

Luna smiled kindly up at her. "Only that I'll have a tough task searching the mists of ages for information that was evidently confined to a chosen few at any time. Also I sincerely trust your brother may be able to say the dog warned him. Even the Fourth Dimension cannot account for a dog's not noting the approach of an enemy to his master."

"Then what can explain it?"

Luna's eyes clouded. "There are more Dimensions than four."

"What's the Fifth Dimension?"

"The Dimension that surrounds and pervades the Fourth—known as the Supernatural—as the Fourth surrounds and pervades the Third Dimension of our ordinary material life. The incredible Dimension that is now faintly glimpsed by the most advanced thinkers. The Dimension I have named and made my peculiar study. And isn't that your Monstrous Man, Miss Hammand?"

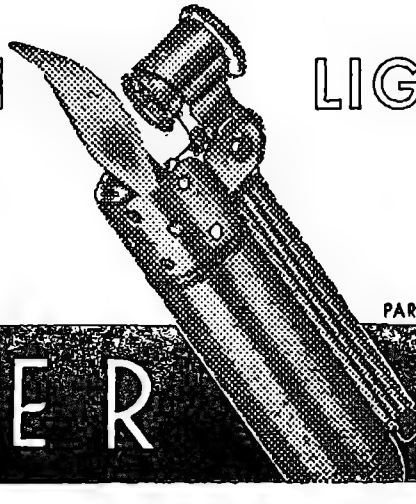
THE northern escarpment of the Downs swept up like a titanic wave over them as the car leapt to the ascent, closed in when it slid into the gap, and swept apart to let it into the open with the village and uplands in view.

"The Shaw, Miss Bartendale," Goddard began, and suddenly put on the brake.

Swanhild looked towards Thunderbarrow Beacon with incredulous eyes; Luna stood up to look over her head. It was clearer on the heights than in the Weald, and it was possible to see a fair way off, hilltops faintly greyer in the general greyness, rivulets like tarnished steel, the Shaw greenish-grey. The ground was beginning to be boggy, every individual leaf dripped slowly, and big drops dribbled off the cuffs and hat brims of the village folk who huddled in groups near the Roman track, gaping in a fascinated horror and ready for an instant flight if need was.

Over the valley, at the end of the track and under the Shaw, could be seen a tiny car and two men, one very big and with the glimmer of white bandages round his head and arms. Goddard turned the car and sent it down the track while Swanhild exclaimed, horror-struck:

ONE MOTION LIGHTS IT!



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"Oliver! He must be delirious—or mad! And I wasn't there when he woke!"

Goddard put the Mercedes to top speed, Swanhild was out and running up the slope before the big car had stopped behind the little one. Oliver hastened to meet her half-way. What could be seen of the left temple and the eye beneath was horribly discoloured, but for all that he looked wonderfully hale and sane.

"Cheer-o, Swan!" he called. "Don't worry, there's a good kid! I'm more sore from your beastly caustic than anything. And—to spare you suspense—I don't remember what I saw last night. I woke before schedule time, the doctor had to admit I was sound and sane, and I wasn't going to leave poor Holder out all day, you know. I say, Swan, is that the Witch?"

He stared past her, his eyes opening wide. She hugged his least hurt arm as hard as she dared while she piloted him to the car. In a less public situation she knew she might have cried with relief.

"My brother Oliver, Miss Bartendale," she said.

"How's Kate?" Luna asked.

"Delirious, and raving of something 'as big as a house' that attacked her. After all, even finding the Monster won't help her—" He broke off.

"It may save others in the future," she returned sharply.

He started.

"Good Lord, I'd forgotten for the moment! It's what I want you for; Swanhild's next in the line."

She nodded gravely. "You don't recollect more than you did when you first came to, Mr. Hammand?"

"Not a scrap. I compared notes with the doctor, and found nothing to add or alter."

She stepped out briskly. "Now for the Shaw. I gather nobody has been in it since last night's happenings?"

"Warren, over there, has." He nodded to where a big, haggard young man in the velveteens of a keeper was speaking to Goddard aside. "He's poor Kate's sweetheart, and he's certain the Ades did it, and means to get them hung for it. Besides—he'll tell you. Warren!"

THE man came forward. His face was horribly drawn, and mottled as though with repressed passions. He held a horse blanket over one arm, a gun sloped under the other.

"I wanted to be the first to enter the Shaw," said Luna.

He looked at her with the sullen, blankly agonised eyes of a man stunned by calamity. "Asking your pardon, ma'am. I had to go through right along. 'Twas bare light when that born fool Will from the Lodge came to the village with the tale that made every grout-headed idiot there start saying the same thing: 'The fust frost sence Squire Reggie died—' they said—"

"Now Warren!" Goddard glanced at Swanhild apprehensively.

"Asking your pardon, sir, I'm saying here, all being friends of the Hammand family, what others is whispering elsewhere. Squire Reggie!" he burst out, hoarse with loosened fury. "Him that 'listed along with you and me, Mr. Oliver! Him that gave me his water bottle half full at Cambrai saying he'd drunk the other half! And me mopping it up before I saw what a liar he was. And now, not content with what's happened to my girl, them that did it must shame his name in the grave!" He controlled himself, and was suddenly calm again. "So I went through the Shaw, and I asked some questions about the two Ades, and then went to the Manor, and Mr. Hammand would come with me to fetch the poor tyke home."

"What of the Ades?" asked Swanhild.

"Charlie's in bed, with a broken collar bone, and Joe has been knocked about considerably. Both bitten, too. It's true Miles, Squire Hudson's keeper had a fight with two poachers he couldn't recognize in the dark, last night, but even if it was them there's only their word that Miles was responsible for all the damage."

"Exactly, one must bear in mind the possibility of a natural explanation of last night," said Luna, opening her little bag.

"I hope and pray it's natural, ma'am," the man responded grimly. "And I believe it. It's natural, and being natural I'll see Squire Reggie's name cleared and my girl avenged. Hey, dowsing? Water-finding?"

She had taken a forked twig from the bag and balanced it between her palms, the third limb dangling loosely. "The Divining Rod finds other things besides water," she replied. "Roska; to heel!"

The big dog took up her position obediently. With the twig dangling between her outstretched hands Luna stood, chin up and eyelids puckered, and turned on her heels in a semi-circle. Her golden curls and pale oval of face were the brightest spots in the dusky scene. Above her the Shaw was a louring patch of dark-

ness against the grey sky, with dim scraps of the Monstrous Man glimpsed between the treetops; behind her the grey-green grass slope, the glistening motors blocked out by clusters of drab peasantry who had ventured near. Their vague blue eyes stared at her, half frightened, out of weatherbeaten faces.

To Swanhild a curious feeling came: an impression that this was no new thing: the Downs with no house in sight, the Monstrous Man on his hill, and dimly scared people round a woman whose face glowed with inward light as she did silent incantations. It had happened before.

STOPPING abruptly in her circular movement, Luna stepped forward a few paces, paused, and looked down. The third limb of the divining twig had risen and stood out horizontally. She was standing on a patch of sodden turf, the grass clotted in places with a sticky blackness that the late rain had not quite washed into the earth. It was where Swanhild had put Oliver down when she bore him from the Shaw.

Then Luna walked steadily, the twig rising and falling at intervals, straight into the ride down which Swanhild had come, to the clearing, and across it; always on Swanhild's track of the night before. Swanhild and the three men followed, Goddard carrying a lamp from the car, for it was dark in the plantation. As she entered the path leading to the second clearing the twig turned right. Oliver, nearest to her, gave an exclamation. She looked down at Roska, who was nosing at the first real splash of blood.

Now her course zigzagged in such a way that the twig came over every trace of blood. At each it rose. When she reached the body of the mastiff it rotated violently. Oliver made a little sound of grief and anger. She looked gently from the dead animal to him, and went on. Past the oak where he had lain, and into the burnt beech. The twig only moved over the track by which she had come. The bramble thicket that huddled against the dead tree was so close-grown that only a snake could have got through without breaking it. And unbroken it was.

"The assailant? He—she—it came and went—which way?" she commented, as though to herself, as she returned down the track, trying every path that led from it. The twig only indicated the way back to the dog.

"You missed my first track," Oliver volunteered. "Poor Kate and I both passed along that ride—"

He pointed. She turned to him, her wide-open eyes, all pupil; sombre, sparkling, blank and soft at once. "I can't follow the paths of normal people, Mr. Hammand. Spilt blood is out of the normal. The rod is only an indicator—like the hands of a watch—in myself resides the Sixth Sense which detects anything abnormal, or supernatural—as the Fourth Dimension is generally named. And blood is the only wrong thing I detect here." She looked down at the dog. "Will you have him put where I can examine him, Mr. Hammand?"

"What do you want to examine him for?" asked Swanhild.

"Teeth marks, and, possibly, a hair or other clue to the nature of what attacked him."

"You think something material did this, after Holder didn't warn me of its coming?" asked Oliver incredulously.

"A supernatural being would have to take to itself a material form with which to inflict these injuries. Even Fourth Dimensional beings—ghosts—have command of Third Dimensional Matter; at least that's how spiritualists explain their manifestations at séances."

Warren rose from rolling the dog in the blanket. "Begging your pardon, ma'am, ain't there room for explanation without calling in spooks?"

"Could you tear off a dog that size, Warren?" asked Oliver.

"No, sir. Nor pull it fairly in two, bones and skin included, as has been done to him here. But two men could between them."

Luna turned her shadowy eyes to him. "You *want* it to prove a mortal criminal; or criminals," she said.

"I do, ma'am. To hang what did for my girl."

"Exactly. Several men in league." Her voice became dreamy. "Else we must figure a creature strong as a horse, that tears with grasping paws—the poor dog's leg was torn off, not bitten at all—bites ferociously, and comes and goes Heaven knows how."

She glanced up casually. Warren started and looked up also. "A big monkey!" he exclaimed. "We'd best ask if one has escaped anywhere. Seems a likely notion, though I hope it ain't true. I want some one to swing for this."

She looked round at the other three, and under her look they said nothing.

"The police ought to be informed, Mr. Hammand," she said.

"Very well," he agreed. "After you've helped Mr. Covert take him to the little car, Warren, run it to the Manor and tell Walton to have him put where Miss Bartendale can examine him. Then warn the police."

"When in doubt one can always fall back on the Murders in the Rue Morgue," commented Luna, when the two men were out of sight with their burden.

"You don't believe the ape theory?" said Oliver.

"No, but it will give the police something to play about with, and you had to warn them. There's one possibility left: that the creature took the same road, both coming and going, along which you and the girl were carried. In which case its trail will be blended with that of the blood; as far as that goes, and will continue beyond the spot where I started. We'll try."

But the rod only led straight back to the spot where Oliver had lain. She returned to the beech and tried about unavailingly. Warren and Goddard were delayed by a hitch in the little car's mechanism. She went through to the further side of the Shaw, without eliciting a single movement of the twig, and paused at the fringe, where a long hillock crowned with pines and firs intervened between the trees and the Beacon sloping up before them. "Artificial?" she enquired, indicating the mound.

"That's Thunder's Barrow, an Ancient British burial hill," Swanhild answered.

Luna climbed to the top of it, and they followed her.

The twig made no sign. "Any connection with the Monster?" she asked, standing on the top and looking at the Monstrous Man.

"I'm not sure," Swanhild returned, looking at Oliver.

He shook his head. "Nor I. Fact is, Miss Bartendale, we were not allowed to hear tales of the Monster when we were kids, and have had enough to think about these last years without it."

"Well, let us look at the Monster's portraits in the church."

Luna turned to descend. He checked her. "One moment, Miss Bartendale. You said you could trace nothing supernatural —Four Dimensional you called it—and there's no sign of a big animal having passed through the Shaw lately. A creature big enough to tear Holder like that must have left traces. If it isn't a mortal creature, and isn't an evil spirit, what can it be?"

"I must remind you of the first question I asked, Mr. Hammand. Did your dog warn you of its approach? A dog's senses are keen both for mortal and ghostly beings. There is a possibility your dog *did* warn you, but you have forgotten it in consequence of the blow on the head. If it is not so, your Monster may prove to be a being of another Dimension—say a Fifth."

"What's the Fifth Dimension?" he asked.

Her eyes were very grave. "The Dimension beyond the Fourth; beyond the supernatural. The Dimension whose embodied powers can do physical destruction, though even a dog cannot detect their presence. The incredible Dimension in which science and Holy church are equally powerless, but which I, who unite science with so-called superstition, have made my peculiar study. I pray heaven your family bane may not prove to be one of its inhabitants."

She turned to descend again. Swanhild suddenly recalled how she had shirked discussion of the Fifth Dimension before, and laid a detaining hand on her arm. Her voice, to her own surprise, had an imploring note in it and she said: "Your power with the divining-rod may have a limit, Miss Bartendale. You followed the blood all right, but though there's dead people in the Barrow under your feet the rod gave no indication of it."

Luna glanced from the mound to the Man again. "Blood spilt about is one thing, Miss Hammand, people buried with the rites of whatever creed they believed are another. Whoever this tumulus holds is at rest. During daylight at least. Night is another matter." She broke off and shivered. "It's cold out here. Now, if you please, for the church."

CHAPTER III

THE HAND OF GLORY

SWANHILD drove the long length of the village at a circumspect pace; it was a winter of harlequin changes in weather, and now the wind had dropped to a languid breeze, not unwarm, that drifted thin billows of mist along the lower ground. Only heights and tree-tops were really distinct at any distance, between shifting grey ground and dull grey sky. From the road, cottages showed indistinctly behind their winter-naked gardens, and beyond the far end of the village a peaked

lych gate stepped out of the fog to meet them. They left the dogs in charge of the car and climbed the gravestone-flagged path to the porch. Dannow church stands on a wooded knoll in the middle of a hollow in a maze of sunk lanes, half a mile away from any habitations save a small farm and two cottages; a not uncommon circumstance in the county where:

"Little, lost, Down Churches praise
The Lord Who made the hills."

There is a tinge of deceit about many small Sussex churches. With them a frontage of Churchwarden Gothic may enshrine an interior of Saxon stonework or Norman wall paintings, and Dannow's outer elevation of a flintwork barn hides an infinite richness of English art in the shape of the Hammand monuments. On that dark day the little place was in deep twilight; Swanhild flashed her torch round and Luna watched, gravely silent, while the memorials of the girl's forebears heaved into the light and sank back into shade. The nearly shapeless Crusader in his niche, brasses on floor and walls, the marble faces of the Warlock and his lady set in a glory of fretted stone and gilt blazonry. Also the little altar, and the copy of James Clarke's picture, and the column of names and fresh laurel wreath beside it.

She said nothing, but her eyes were again what they had been in the Shaw; blank, yet living globes of sombre tourmaline; as she paced round part of the building, only pausing to cross herself before the altar. "I thought these psychic people were all Agnostics or Jezreelites or something," Oliver whispered, surprised.

"Hush," returned Swanhild. "It's underbred to whisper—in church too. Besides, she'll hear you."

Luna took no notice of them as she examined with eyes and fingers the rubbed figure on which the Crusader's feet rested. Finally she spoke, her voice respectfully lowered. "It's sadly defaced," she said. "But it has animal paws—round paws."

"Well?" asked Swanhild.

"Doesn't it strike you as strange? It's ve-ry curious." She stopped and stared musingly from Sir Oliver Hammand the Crusader to the modest brass plate on the wall above him which stated that Reginald Hammand, Late of This Parish, died at Jerusalem, 1918. "We will see if the Anchorite brass sheds any light on these paws," she said at last.

It was in the floor of the nave. Goddard rolled up the matting and displayed a great sheet of metal incised with the figure of a man in monastic garb, a nondescript beast under his feet and a battered inscription below it. The beast's head was vaguely doglike, with long nose and pricked-up ears, the body slim in the waist, and the tail snaky and ending in what might have been either a tuft of hair or the conventional barb that ends a conventional devil's tail. Luna went on her knees to trace every line of it.

"It might be meant for anything on four feet," she commented, getting up and studying it with her head on one side. "Monumental natural history is of a go-as-you-please nature, and people have always bred the dog into *outré* shapes, but that's no canine tail. And those paws—It's inexplicable."

She crossed to the Warlock's tomb. There was that about the blank concentration of her eyes that made the others refrain from questions, though all three glanced at the brass animal's paws as they followed her. Commonplace, doglike paws, after a brass-engraver's stock pattern. Swanhild ran her light along the rigid figures of the Warlock and his wife, stiff garments, set faces, and hands pointed in prayer four centuries.

"No animal at their feet," observed Luna. Swanhild directed the light to the only other figure on the tomb. It was at the side, a small child, shrouded and resting on a skull.

"That, according to the village, is one of the kids he sacrificed to Satan or else fed to the Monster," Oliver remarked. "Of course it's really one of their own that died young. Really, you mustn't do that, Miss Bartendale!" he protested, horrified, as she went on her knees to examine the pavement where the base of the tomb rested. "Let me—"

She smiled up at him. "Thanks, I must do it myself. I'm looking for a possible crack leading to the vault beneath."

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "Do you believe that yarn about the old blighter's spook coming out at night?"

"I'm testing every tradition, searching every Dimension." She sat back on her heels and got out the rod. "There's one small chink under the skull—"

BALANCING the rod, she laid her face against the skull. "The cheekbone is very sensitive," she explained. Her eyes were blank, but the rod made no move-

ment, and after a minute she rose and replaced it. "The old Necromancer apparently rests in peace; by daylight at least."

"Do you think his soul's at rest on account of this?" Swanhild indicated the inscription on the tomb. The names of the Warlock and his wife and the dates of their decease—8th and 10th February, 1526—in Latin; then, in English:

YE PARDON FOR SAYING OF V
PATNOST AND V AVE
AND A CRED IS XXVI MILT YEARS
AND XXVI DAIES.

"I suppose you know it means that anyone who says so many prayers for the souls' repose of his wife and himself will be left off twenty-six thousand years and twenty-six days of Purgatory," she added.

Luna nodded. "It's very significant."

"Do you believe this sort of thing helps to keep the old perisher quiet?" asked Oliver, staring.

"Sincere prayer can do much. The point is this: 'Pardons' of this description were sold by the Old Church, and this"—she touched the XXVI MILT YEARS—"is the longest ever granted. On a tomb and at such an early date it is unique. Now, what monstrous crime can the buyer have had on his conscience that he felt impelled to bribe posterity so monstrously to pray for his soul's rest?"

"His wife and kiddie, you know—" Swanhild reminded her.

Luna folded her lips and shook her head. Her eyes had gone back to their normal state, her fair curls and vivid little face were uncannily alive against the cold grey of the tomb as she leant an elbow on it and frowned thoughtfully at the effigy. The pleasant conversational tone of her lovely voice cut eerily clear through the hush of the church as she went on placidly: "The Monster had done such things before, it had haunted the family centuries before he was born. Why should he feel the need of pardon for a mere repetition of previous happenings? A man who had the nerve to follow studies forbidden by Holy Church, was not likely to go insane over such a catastrophe—unless he blamed himself for it."

"Well?" Swanhild prompted.

"I'm testing every tradition, you know," Luna proceeded. "This Pardon confirms most emphatically the one which alleges that the Warlock gave the Monster a fresh lease of life. If we can find what he did to rouse it we may find the opposite process—how to bind it."

"*If,*" said Goddard, with meaning.

"Quite right. If. We must not raise too much hope, after the way Cromwell's men knocked about the hidden room. They may have stolen or destroyed the clue to the Warlock's reference to it. Still, we have something to work on. We know the Warlock dabbled in occultism: or necromancy as it was then called. Occultism pre-supposes the existence of Abnormal Dimensions whose inhabitants are divided from our wholesome Normal, or Third Dimensional, world by barriers they cannot pass. Only by the practice of Black Magic presumptuous mortals can outrage nature; break the barriers and admit abnormal beings into our world. And once they have entered, keeping them in hand is another matter."

"Then you believe the tale that the Monster's a devil the Warlock raised, and that it got out of control and he left it loose when he died?" Oliver asked.

"I'm testing traditions. The influence from the Pardon is clear, while the brass—"

She checked herself, and glanced over to the nave. "What's wrong with the brass?" Swanhild demanded anxiously.

"I don't quite understand something about it. We'll shunt it into my subconscious mind pro tem, and concentrate on the Warlock. It is certain he blamed himself for the tragedy of February 8th, 1526. It is equally certain it had something to do with the monstrous sins into which occultism leads its votaries. And, unless Cromwell's men spoilt it, it is certain he left the clue to the matter in the hidden room."

She stood up and looked at the effigy again. "What monstrous sin led to that pardon?" she repeated, half to herself. "It is not a bad face:

'So in the moonlit minster your fathers ye may see,
By the side of the ancient mothers, await the Day to Be.'

Not a bad face," she repeated. "Ascetic if anything. Evidently a portrait. Strong family likeness to you both, Miss Hammand. And he seems to be at rest. Yet—"

Swanhild, whose susceptible 'teens had been passed in an atmosphere of "A stout fighter can do little wrong," answered eagerly. "He fought at Bosworth, as one of Henry VII's standard keepers, and was knighted on the field. There's his helmet

and sword hanging together on the wall."

"If Miss Bartendale says he was a rotter he must have been a rotter, Swan," Oliver reproved.

"I don't say he was," Luna returned. "Still he dabbled in arts forbidden, between the gallant days of Bosworth and the final rest in the odour of bought sanctity. The early Tudor period was a time of great mental progress, good and bad, like our own early Windsor era. Some strong intellects unravelled the wholesome, useful secrets of nature. Others gorged like ghouls on the unholy remains of mental abominations an elder age had tested and tried to consign to the grave.

"Necromancy will seduce the noblest minds, as we have painful evidence in our own age. And the evil a man does may haunt those who come after him to the end of time, while he rests in peace himself. So that's his helmet?" She touched with a finger the dinted globe of rusty iron. "Our object is to get what's inside my skull connected with what was once protected by that metal."

"But there's four hundred years between you and the old blighter, and his brain's been dust long ago," Oliver protested.

"Four hundred years, or four thousand, can be bridged sometimes, when it's a question of connecting two human brains."

"You'll hold a séance and summon his spirit?" Swanhild put in.

"My dear girl!" Luna looked pained. "I thought I made some observations about occultism just now. I never resort to the antiquated and noisome fashion of sitting in a dark room looking for nervous self-deception. The Warlock's brain has been non-existent for centuries, but what fed it and dictated its thoughts still exists. I'll consult the Black Magical text-books of his era as last resort. Now to see if Cromwell's men really ruined the hidden room."

In the nave she reached the brass, glanced down, and turned to inspect it again, her back to the others. After a minute she went on her way with them. Oliver and Swanhild looked at each other over her head as she walked between them, but neither dared to ask a question. A new and overpowering sobriety had come to her. "It's awfully cold," she remarked. They exchanged another look, for her voice had betrayed her. It was suddenly flat, as though she had received a shock.

Now what could she have seen in a min-

ute's second inspection of the brass that had taken the sparkle from voice and eyes?

THE mist had begun to shred away a little by the time Dannow's foursquare bulk loured into sight. Dark smears and rags of ivy draped it like a frayed shroud, twisted chimneys writhed snakelike up into the fog above it, and round its girding wall the weedy moat faded into the murk to either hand. Before the moat bridge Swanhild stopped the car and Oliver called Luna's attention to an uncertain mass glooming up beyond where the moat was lost to sight.

"That's a clump of pines on the edge of the moat, and the hidden room's opposite them," he told her. "If it wasn't so wet underfoot I'd take you round to see the grating that ventilates it."

"A grating? Then one can see into it from outside?"

"No, that's where the artfulness comes in. There's two iron grilles, one flush with the outer face of the wall, one with the inner. The wall's four feet thick, and the bottom of the outside grille is level with the top of the other. Even if the room is lit up anyone outside could only see a bit of the floor."

In the Holbein room Walton had a tray ready and a fire that made all four realize they were cold and stiff. They gathered around it while he went upstairs for certain keys, and Oliver inspected the tray and chuckled grimly. "Topping old souls, our housekeeper-cook and butler-valet, eh, Swan? There's everything I'm likely to fancy about this time of day here, and the inference is pretty obvious. Walton and Mrs. W. have laid their heads together and agreed to make my possible last hours as comfy as possible. They evidently expect I may run away and hang myself all of a sudden—"

"Oh, Oliver—" protested Swanhild.

"They do. Even you, Miss Bartendale, have looked at me closely once or twice."

She looked up from her occupation of warming her dainty, beringed little hands, and replied placidly, "So I have. Just wondering if we had met before though I can't remember the occasion. And here, I think, are the keys."

As he could not use his hands, Swanhild took charge of the keys, and led the way to the old part of the house. They all kept their coats on, Goddard carried a lamp, and the dogs followed at their owners' heels. At the end of a corridor Swanhild attended to the Yale, the old-fashioned spring lock, and the padlock that secured an iron-bound door. Damp, cold air slapped their faces like a gigantic hand when they stepped through. Half Dannow is like that; cold even in summer, a complex of twisting passages, damp walls, peeling plaster and rotted woodwork, with cobwebbed windows and dangerous stairs.

"Flowing water somewhere," said Luna when they had descended to a stone built passage. Swanhild turned the keys of two more locks and flung open another metal-bound door. The gurgle and swirl of water sounded like the chuckling of a drunken ogre where the threshold stone ended over a black gap. Goddard held the lamp in; the light flashed from a rippling black surface some feet down. "Cellar," said Oliver; "and the spring that feeds the moat. Go first, Goddard, you've been this way before."

The wall in which the door was set was not as thick as that of the water-filled cellar, consequently a foot wide ledge stretched away to left and right. Goddard stepped along that on the right to the corner. There another door was set in a niche some six feet square and deep, and from it he lit the way for the others. "A movable stone used to be here, this is a comparatively recent addition," Oliver explained, while Swanhild unlocked the door.

Again Goddard led the way, passing down a stair made of mere chunks of oak pegged together. At the foot of it he stood with the light; Luna suddenly drew back with a start. Her eyes turned sideways to the light shining up the stair; they were wide and black again and her face had gone very white.

"Eh—what?" gasped Oliver. Swanhild turned her torch on; in the white glare Luna's forehead glistened and her eyes were uncanny with their sombre calm ringed by golden lashes. "There's something very wrong down there," she said, in a detached tone, glancing down at the dogs. Her own animal looked up at her sympathetically; otherwise neither exhibited any emotion.

"Then you must not—" Oliver began, but she was already on the stairs. He plunged after her, his most usable arm ready to lunge at any danger, and in a few moments all stood within the hidden room.

"Something very wrong here," she repeated, standing by the oak table in the middle, "but nothing that threatens active harm. Some—out of the Normal, but not Ab-normal with a capital A."

"Fourth Dimensional?" Swanhild prompted.

"Oh, no, my dear girl. More like Three and a Half Dimensional. It can't be full Fourth, or the dogs would notice it."

The animals had settled themselves placidly under the table. "My dog didn't notice anything coming in the Shaw before I did," Oliver put in nervously. "You'd better go back—"

SHE started to pace around the room, taking the torch, for the lamp Goddard had put on the table lit the walls but dimly. "I am safe from danger in any dimension, through my knowledge," she said, but he followed her, obviously ready to put himself between her and any danger. The room was solid stonework, walls and floor of large blocks, ceiling of narrow ones laid on oaken rafters. Two large oil-heaters, incongruously new and shiny, explained why, for all its nearness to the moat, the place was fairly free from damp; only the wall opposite the stairs was smeared with fine moss round the iron-bound oak shutters. These Goddard opened, letting in a gush of cold fresh air through a grating of twisted ironwork.

They looked through this up an oblique shaft; smoke blackened, to another grating and a glimpse of pines and grey sky seen dully in mist. The ceiling and upper part of the walls were also darkened with smoke, evidently the product of a brick furnace that was erected against the wall between stairs and grating.

On the table lay four great leather bound books, a little mildewed. About a dozen jars and bowls of red earthenware; some fire-blackened, stood beside the furnace, on the floor, together with a scattered pile of smashed glass and potsherds drifted with dust and cobwebs. At the other side of the furnace were laid out several chunks of stone, the fragments of a single broken block, all drifted up with dust also. After looking closely at everything Luna opened her bag and took out the rod again.

"There's something wrong here," she repeated. "Is there any hiding place—in the thickness of the walls, for instance?"

"It's been proved over and over that not an inch of the walls or floor or ceiling sounds hollow," returned Swanhild.

Luna stared around under level brows. "The Roundheads must have destroyed the clue—yet I feel something. What's that broken stone?"

"It's inscribed with the rhyme I told you about the pines and bane. Somebody must have smashed it while getting it out of the wall—you can see the hole there—under the impression that the secret might be hidden behind it."

Now Luna balanced the rod between her palms, and at once the third limb rose to the horizontal. With her eyes at their widest and blackest she began a tour of the room, the rod rising and falling again as she approached and passed the furnace. When she rested a wrist on the brickwork the twig turned over languidly. "Puzzling, very puzzling," she commented to herself. "Indications, but faint and insufficient."

Moving on to the jars she placed a foot on each in turn. At the fifth the rod rotated briskly. It was a big jar with a cover, like a bread crock. Swanhild ran and removed the cover, revealing a layer of dust under the brim. Goddard elbowed her aside gently and paddled in it with his fingers. "A hard, level surface," he reported. "Excuse my shoving, Swan, but where I was raised men are supposed to attend to unclean jobs."

He scooped the dust aside, and felt the surface beneath with his nails. "A solid mass, like hardened sand and salt."

"Smash it," said Oliver, dribbling a lump of stone from the broken inscription across the floor with his feet. "Oh, I say!" he added suddenly, "I hope it isn't any old Isabella-and-the-pot-of-basil stunt! If it is, salt's just the thing—"

"There's no room for a head in it," Swanhild returned. Goddard took the stone and soon the crock and its contents lay in a scattered heap of shards and powder and lumps of unclean crystals. "There's nothing but filthy sand and salt," he reported, after flattening it all out with the stone.

Luna put the toe of one shoe on the mass, and again the rod moved. "There's something amiss with it, but not powerful enough to account for my feeling. We'll leave it for the time."

SHE walked past the stairs to the third wall. At once the rod began to turn over rapidly. She drew in a quick breath and ran one finger lightly up and down the wall. The pace of the rod increased as her hands went upwards, slackened when they were as far up as she could reach, and when she brought them down level with her shoulders it whirled at a tremendous pace and leapt out of her hold. The little tap of it on the floor made the others realize the tense silence in which they had been watching.

She turned to them, passed a hand over her forehead, and looked at them with her eyes normal again and full of horror. "This is the centre of the influence," she exclaimed, touching a stone level with her shoulder, "and it's horrible—horrible!"

"But the wall's solid!" Goddard pounded it with the stone.

"It is; yet it's the centre of influence." She blinked at them, her face drawn and white and her mouth squared as though with intense strain, and crossed to the open shutters. Her features lost their tenseness in the mist-streaked draught that stirred the little curls about her ears and forehead. "The rod rather takes it out of one," she remarked, apologetically. "Moreover, that stone, though it's not a foot square, has something incredibly revolting about it. In thirteen years' practice the rod has only jumped out of my hands twice before."

"The plaster's crumbling, in fact it isn't real plaster, only clay smeared in." Goddard looked round from picking at the stone. "I do believe the block's movable."

"A sucker is what we want," said Swanhild quietly. She had already wrenched the tongue off one of her shoes. She took a knife and hank of twine out of her pockets, trimmed the leather to a circle, and knotted the stout string through the middle. "There's a smugglers' hiding hole in a cottage here, and you pull up a brick in this way," she said, talking as she worked. "I'll soak it in the spring."

While she was gone Goddard picked the clay out, Luna turned over the books on the table. "*The Desir Desire,* the *Book of Abraham,* the *Duodecim Portarum,* and Albertus Magnus," she observed. "Fine mss., Mr. Hammand, and comparatively harmless. Merely alchemy and vulgarity. But, of course, Cromwell's men may have stolen worse works."

Swanhild returned and the wet sucker was flattened on the stone. A good pull brought out a block about two feet long and apparently solid, which slid out like a tight fitting drawer. Goddard got his shoulder under it and with Swanhild's help deposited it on the table.

"By Jove, I see!" he cried. "The back half fits like a lid."

"You open it, Goddard," said Oliver.

Goddard lifted it and with it came a gush of scent, like a faint rush of compressed stale air. Dry, and vapid, and sickly without being absolutely offensive. Swanhild shivered and involuntarily drew back from the table. The hollowed place at the rear of the block only held two bundles, long narrow bundles wrapped in musty linen. Goddard took the uppermost, shook it, and rolled into the lamplight a dry, wrinkled object less than a foot long.

"A bundle of cigars gone wrong?" Oliver hazarded, staring at this secret of four hundred years.

"A piece of cut leather?" Swanhild faltered, feeling oddly uncomfortable about the spine and scalp.

Goddard turned it over gingerly, and then wiped his fingers on his coat. "Ugh!" he grunted. "It's a hand! A filthy, disgusting old mummied hand!"

They all looked at Luna. From her distance she regarded it with unsurprised disgust.

"It is a Hand of Glory," she said.

THE mist-laden draught brought enough of daylight through the grilles to impart a garish suggestion of the unnatural to the lamplight, the faces grotesquely shadowed around it, and the dried brown horror in the glare of it. Only Luna, full in what natural light there was, seemed wholesome and real. There was a little silence while the three round the table groped mentally after vague recollections of old horror-tales. Then, with a start of mild surprise, Swanhild was aware of her own voice repeating the Ingoldsby jingle:

"Now open, lock, to the Dead Man's knock!
Fly, bolt, and bar and band!
Nor move, nor swerve, Joint, muscle, or nerve,
At the Spell of the Dead Man's hand!
Sleep, all who sleep! Wake, all who wake:
But be as the dead for the Dead Man's sake!"

"What's the thing, anyhow, Miss Bartendale?" asked Oliver, in a hushed voice.

"The hand of a hanged murderer, pickled with saltpetre and long pepper"—she glanced at the broken crock—"and dried by a fire of male fern and vervain."

Oliver's gaze followed hers to the furnace. "And what are the disgusting blobs of grease on the finger-tips?"

"Candles. Made from the same source that supplied the hand. The directions are in the *Dictionaire Infernal,* also, I think, in Albertus Magnus, by your elbow there."

Goddard shivered. "I once read a yarn in a magazine about a chap who got a hand out of an old burial mound, and used to send it to murder people he disliked—"

Luna smiled drily. "O. W. Holmes declared the world was a thin solution of books in his days. Now it is a turgid one

"The ship *Nagelfare* is launched and sailing with a crew of hell's legions. . . !"

of journalistic misinformation. The function of the Hand of Glory is to reveal hidden treasure; also, while the candles on it burn, anyone who is on guard is supposed to be paralyzed."

"Then can it have any connection with the Monster?" asked Swanhild.

"Heaven knows. Perhaps the other parcel may shed light on the matter. Pray open it, Mr. Covert."

Goddard took up the second bundle. "Bigger and heavier. If it's even beastlier don't say I didn't warn you, ladies," he said, and jerked out the contents beside the hand. They were all keyed up in expectation of a further horror; it was almost a shock when a green and golden thing of beauty clattered out. The upper part of a sword, a golden hilt, a hand's length of bronze, green with verdigris, below it, and two flat ribbons of verdigrised bronze curling from the pommel, like a crossguard in the wrong place. For the first time that day Luna's expression was one of surprise. She came over and picked up the object to examine it closely.

"What's it?" asked Oliver, flatly. "Another obscenity?"

She gently shook her head. "Without doubt your Warlock ancestor made the hand for his own unlawful uses. But this is past my comprehension. How, when, where and why he secured it and hid it with the hand is a puzzle. Particularly as there is nothing objectionable about it. That is centred in the hand. Perhaps the runes may have something to do with this treasuring it."

She handed it to Swanhild and indicated the golden part. This consisted of two plates riveted on the bronze foundation; they were much worn, but rude figures could be discerned in low relief on both. "Runic writing," she said.

"What does it say?" demanded Swanhild.

"Nobody alive can read runes offhand, and I cannot read them at all. They may contain some hallowed spell; ancient northern tradition abounds with tales of broadswords with runic charms on them."

"Then this is ancient? Older than the Warlock's time?"

"If genuine it was about two thousand years old before your Tudor ancestor lived. These 'Antennae hilted' swords belong to the Later Bronze Age, which ended about 700 B.C. The gold plates may be a later addition, but this blade was most likely made when Rome was one row of mud huts and the Ten Tribes were still unlost."

OLIVER stared at her with eyes that could open no wider. "Do you mean that the Monster, the thing that mauled me and tore the flesh right off poor Kate last night, is something that came from the north in the Bronze Age?"

"We don't know if these discoveries have anything to do with the Monster at all. Only it is significant that this is Northern because Northern demonology and necromancy have been strangely neglected in these days of occultism, occultism everywhere. Some dreadful thing begotten of Northern gloom and frost, and—" She checked herself. "I confess I am at sea for the time."

"You have already found out more than anyone else has in four hundred years," he consoled heartily.

"I've only lit on disconnected data that make the matter more confusing than it was at the start. However, I don't despair. In one case I handled the trouble happened to a colonial soldier during the war; I traced its origin to the fourteenth century, and found the remedy in America. Fact, I assure you. Your Monster has been in evidence a thousand years at least; such incredibly powerful and persistent manifestations may well have thousands of years of growth behind them. Now, let us turn to the Warlock's statement that the secret of the Monster was to be found in this room. Why did he content himself with this vague declaration? If the hand and hilt were what he meant, why did he not specify their location? If they are not connected with it, why did he say anything at all?"

"Something else may be hidden here," Swanhild suggested.

"Impossible," Luna declared. "The hand, and the jar and furnace used in preparing it, are the only abnormalities in the place."

"You called them Three and a Half Dimensional," the girl persisted. "What if the Warlock's secret is Fourth Dimensional?"

"Fourth? What's commonly known as a spirit? I should at once detect its presence, and so would the dogs."

"What if it's Fifth Dimensional?" demanded Swanhild, looking her straight in the eyes.

A little frown drew down Luna's brows ever so slightly, but she returned smoothly: "At present I do not care to advance a positive opinion on the possible connection of a Fifth Dimensional influence with this room."

Under her direction they probed and

pried, sounded every stone, and raked out the broken glass and pottery. Finally they took a book each and went over every page in search of marginal notes, pin pricks or dotted letters that might point to a cipher message. The search was without result, Luna finished her volume first and went roaming about while the other three still pored over their task. When Swanhild finally closed the *Desir Desire* she was engaged in scraping the dirt out of the sunk letters on the broken stone.

"I can let you have a good photo, taken when the lettering was cleaned up for the purpose," said Swanhild. "It's only the rhyme I repeated about the Monster and frost and pines."

"It's ve-ry curious," rejoined Luna. "It must be older than the Warlock's time, as the hole it came from is as black as the wall around it. I understand the furnace hasn't been lit since he left it in 1526? Then he left the broken block lying about all the years he was at work there?"

"Oh, no. The pieces were used to build part of the furnace. Look, there are the clean holes they were taken from afterwards."

"I meant to ask about those holes. Then he didn't understand the meaning of the rhyme. He simply found a broken stone hanging about and used it. He saw nothing interesting in the words."

"They are very simple. Only a plain warning."

"My dear girl, there's nothing that rouses my suspicions like an apparently simple article over which anybody has made a mystery. That the Warlock saw nothing more about these lines than Peter Bell did about a primrose by the river's brim is evident; the puzzle is this: Why were these simple lines ever carved here?"

Swanhild eyed the broken block gravely. "I never thought of that. Have you got a theory, Miss Bartendale?"

"No. At present I'm suffering from an overplus of data. Yet every detail, from the Bronze Age sword to the Warlock's easy utilising of this block, may have some bearing on the matter. We have heard of such things as jigsaw puzzles. I see the men are shutting their tomes simultaneously. What luck, gentlemen?"

"The old perisher didn't add marking valuable books to his other crimes," Oliver answered.

"Apparently. This was only a cursory inspection; if necessary I shall go through all four later. Just now we have done all we can here, and it's getting a bit chilly. I understand nothing had to be moved from the room, Mr. Hammand?"

"You may do as you like, of course. Only you surely don't want to take that away?" Oliver indicated the hand.

"The fates forbid! I shouldn't like to touch it with a hop pole. I merely wish to submit the inscription to an authority on runic lore I know."

"Would it be safe for you to take it?"

"I've told you the evil influence is centred in the hand and where it was prepared. Look"—she took up the sword—"I could not handle this bonny bit of metal work if it were not wholesome."

"Then we'll pack it for you. What of the hand?"

"Put it back in its place and I'll make it safe."

WHEN Goddard had replaced the sliding stone she plastered the joint between it and the wall all around with some malleable white stuff and dried herb which she produced from the bag and kneaded together. "Evil powers are not supposed to get past garlic and purified beeswax," she explained.

Then smiling at their blank looks, she supplemented: "I don't say I believe in this kind of hocus pocus, but there's no harm in taking precautions."

Then they went up again. After the hidden room it was refreshing to have the bubble of the spring at their feet and to see the light glint on moss-slimed walls and crawling black water. Oliver drew a deep breath and shivered. "Even a water logged cellar feels sweet to stickiness after the abode of our friend the hand!" said Goddard.

Oliver was very grave. "I didn't notice it at the time, either because it came on gradually, or with the excitement of finding the things, but I now realise how beastly it was in the room. Yet it wasn't stuffy. What do you think, Swan?"

"The hand was ghastly, Oliver. Otherwise I didn't notice anything queer."

"I didn't mind the hand." He frowned thoughtfully. "Still, there was a putrid feeling—as though the air was full of something I half recognised. Full of—of—"

"Black butterflies ridden by blue devils?" suggested Goddard, gaily. "We've had our fill of nastiness this morning, Oliver. Don't get silly ideas into that cracked headpiece of yours."

Luna gave the speaker an approving glance, but Oliver turned on him indig-

nantly. "This is a serious matter, Goddard, even if you don't think so. There was a feeling about, especially after the hand was on the table. If I stayed there long enough—with the hand—by myself —I think I might remember—"

His voice trailed off and he put his hand hesitatingly up to his hurt temple.

Swanhild, quivering with apprehension but afraid to interfere, cast an agonised look at Luna.

In response: "You'll remember when I order you to do so," Luna snapped, in a thin, imperative voice that acted like a bugle call on Oliver.

He straightened galvanically, and the confused look left his face. "When you order me to remember?" he said.

"That is what I said. Until then, if you have any regard for your sister's peace of mind, and do not wish to risk possible danger to more than mind and body, you will not trouble your head at all with efforts to remember."

"You have a theory—" he accused.

Almost sternly the answer came. "I found the hand and hilt—more than anyone else has done in four centuries!" Her tone changed: "Come, Mr. Hammand, we have had enough work and horrors for the time! Don't forget I am a specialist, and specialists never advance a premature opinion —unless some wretched journalist catches them off their guard! When the runes are read by my professor it will be time enough for theorising."

She laughed, but there was something in tone and laugh that stopped further questioning.

CHAPTER IV

"AN ENTIRELY NEW CRIME—"

TWO STEP from the deserted part of the house into the lived-in portion was like getting away from the oppression of a bad dream. They did not realise how long they had been in the hidden room until Swanhild opened the final door and they found Walton hovering nervously in the corridor on the other side. The old man's evident relief at their appearance told plainly that he had been hanging about for a long time in the throes of anxiety; he explained that the inspector from Steyning was waiting to hear an account of the last night's doings. As Miss Bartendale would not be needed for that purpose Swanhild established her in the Holbein room with certain genealogical mss. and the photograph of the inscription.

When the three returned she was curled in a chair before the fire, frowningly regarding a huge sheet of parchment that was spread on the rug. "What's that?" asked Oliver, lowering himself into another chair.

"What? Don't you recognize your family tree to 1650?"

"Never saw it unrolled before, and I don't suppose Swan has."

"Ah, I see. You've simply taken it for granted that some people came between you and Adam. Then I presume you don't even know you are of Danish descent?"

"Danish?"

"I suspected it, from the very unusual name Swanhild, that seems as much a fixture in the line as the distinctly Scandinavian cast of features which I noted both in you two and the Warlock's effigy and the portraits here." She glanced at the Streete, then indicated the parchment's branching tree of angular pen lines with clumps of elaborate writing and tiny coloured shields dotted all over it. "Look, that recumbent individual in the idea of Danish mail entertained in 1650, from whose person the tree springs, is your first notable ancestor. The entry about him is in Latin, but I'll translate:

'Magnus Hamandr's son, who was kin of the Royal House of Denmark, married her.'

"The 'her' in question is Edith, the Saxon heiress of the place at the time."

"By Jove! And that Bronze Age sword—you said it is northern!"

"Getting warm, aren't we? Some dashing Dane married the heiress of the old Saxon line. Probably he was a pirate and slaughtered the rest of the family prior to the nuptials, but that doesn't concern us. The main fact is that his father, Hamandr, must have been a distinguished individual, since his name was given to the line when surnames came in. And look here, under his name is the first red entry. He was the first of the Monster's victims—in England at least."

She emphasized the last words, and paused. Swanhild took up the discourse. "A Magnus came into the line from Denmark, and with him the Monster first appeared."

"Exactly. And one of his descendants, also a Magnus, seven centuries later, practised Black Art and treasured a Bronze Age sword of Scandinavian origin. He even kept it with his most private necromantic tool. It all points to Denmark, the Danish an-

cestor, the sword, even the northern trees —pine and fir—that are to be avoided. We have learnt something this morning."

She leaned back in her chair and added in a different tone: "As a Bachelor of Medicine I ought to know better than to read by firelight! It's two o'clock; don't I hear a gong somewhere? While my conscious mind is attending to lunch its subconscious mate will sift the facts we have gathered and compare them with others stored in my memory, and later I may be able to shed some light on the initiatory ritual of the hidden room."

"The—what?" asked Oliver, but she got up, slipped her arm in Swanhild's, and answered lightly.

"Here ends the morning's work. Talking shop at mealtimes is the unforgivable sin. At least that's one of the maxims on which I have been brought up."

"Hear, hear!" assented Goddard. "A misdemeanour has to be pretty poisonous to outrage Nature and good manners concurrently." To Swanhild he whispered: "Whatever that little woman may be in the occult line, she understands managing men who want it. You've noted, haven't you, how admirably she pulls up old Oliver whenever he starts to try and recollect?"

NEVER were the two sides of a normal personality kept more strictly separate than in Luna Bartendale. The slight aloofness that had seemed to enfold her like a veil when she worked, vanished at will and left her nothing but her unprofessional self: the prettiest and most debonair little woman that ever made other women like her as easily as men did.

Throughout lunch she confined the talk to light topics. In a short time the Hammands felt as though they had known her for years, and Swanhild noted that Oliver was brighter than he had been since 1914. Only when the coffee and cigarette stage was prolonging itself unduly, Luna looked at her watch, and switched back to business.

"We will have another look at the documents," she announced, in the voice that went with the divining rod.

"Don't be in an indecent hurry," Oliver urged. "After a couple of hours' rest—"

"In a couple of hours I must be on the way to Hassocks," she returned, and led the way back to the Holbein room. There she spread the mss. and photograph out on the table. "Now we will have my subconscious mind's reconstruction of the family history. The Monster came into the line with Magnus the Dane, and its nature was known to the family until the year 1456—"

"The year 1456?" Swanhild repeated.

"These are my conclusions; you shall hear the reasons later. The secret, as I said, was lost in the year 1456, when the initiatory ritual of the hidden room was discontinued. Many years later the secret was rediscovered by Magnus the Warlock, apparently as a result of his necromantic studies, with terrible consequences. Since then the Monster has manifested itself at irregular intervals, but no one has ever been able to explain what it is. Now for the ritual."

She took up the photograph. "Look at this. It explains the story: repeated in books and magazine articles to this day, of the heir of the manor being initiated into some secret in the hidden room. You have assured me it is not done, but evidently it *was* done—up to 1456. This inscription was hacked by someone unused to such a task. Not scratched casually, but the labour of many hours. Now why was not a proper workman employed?"

"Because there was something in the room at that time, that could not be concealed from anyone who entered it?" suggested Oliver.

"Precisely. But the rhyme is a simple thing. Why was it not carved by a professional and the block then inserted in the wall?"

"The block was in the wall already?"

"No. It is Sussex marble, easier to carve than the harder stone of which the room is built. It was specially inserted by those who were allowed to know the room's secret. This implies that the rhyme—though it is public property now—was considered unfit for general circulation—*when the clue to its exact meaning was known.*"

"The meaning seems so plain," said Oliver.

"Seems, *seems!*" she returned. "Language is so wonderful! So far we make out that each successive heir was taken into the room when he was of age, and made to learn the lines: after their occult meaning had been explained to him."

"How did the knowledge disappear, then, in the year you specified?" asked Swanhild.

"Because, as I gather, the family was practically wiped out, as regards the male members, at the battle of Blore Heath in 1456. The owner of Dannow was killed there, and the only male Hammand left was Magnus; the Warlock-to-be; who was only born in the previous year. Don't you

see? All the holders of the secret died at once."

"Oh!" Oliver nodded emphatically. "The Yorkists sacked the place, too; they must have destroyed all clues to the secret. It was always said they broke up the inscription."

"Exactly. The secret lapsed utterly, until Magnus, many years after, rediscovered it. That is, he found out *part* of it. He 'raised' the Monster after it had been at rest or bound over a century, but did not know how to control it; a matter that was probably taught by the ritual."

"ALL that sounds logical," said Goddard, glancing down the parchment and then at the second one which continued the genealogy to "Oliver, born 1893." "Only; look at this, Miss Bartendale. From the first Magnus, about 830, to the Anchorite, 1392, is 562 years, and in that time the Monster appeared eighteen times. From the Warlock, 1526, to this year is nearly three hundred years, but it has only appeared seven times. Three cases and more to a century while the ritual was known, barely two to the same time when it was forgotten. Yet you hold the ritual was of a protective nature. What do you make of that?"

She met the glance of his searching brown eyes without a change in her own. "That possibly the ritual, instead of being a guard, ensured the supplying of the Monster with frequent victims, of course."

Oliver gave an exclamation of disgusted horror. "Miss Bartendale! That's too beastly! The tale of the human sacrifices—"

"I don't credit that wholly: though you must remember sacrifice is never beastly *if it is voluntary.*"

"But those people who were killed didn't die voluntarily—"

"I am merely pointing out data; not advancing any theory at this early stage." She lapsed into a fit of musing, turning the photograph about with one hand while the other toyed with the dimple on her chin. Oliver, sitting opposite her, mused also. He could not decide which was most to be envied; the lucky fingers that might caress the dimple, or the happy dimple that might be caressed by the fingers. At last she had to look up, compelled by his steady gaze.

"The first two lines are complete: *'Where grow pines and firs amain, Under stars sans heat or rain'*— The third begins with a gap in the stone. Your version of the missing link, Miss Hammand, was—?"

"*'Chief of.'*"

"*'Chief of Hammand, 'ware thy Bane.'* Really, you know, it doesn't sound absolutely it, with the dot and cross! *'Chief of Hammands'* might be better, though still feeble."

"The exigencies of metrical composition may have compelled the author to jolly with the sense," suggested Goddard.

"Not very likely. In medieval rhymes when it was a question of sacrificing sense or scansion, scansion went. One word is lost, that is certain, and the accepted restoration does not make too much sense."

"The first letter is a C," he pointed out. "Half of it is left."

"The upper half of a rounded letter. It might be O or Q, G or S, as well as C."

"Does it matter?"

"It might and it might not. Also the remains of the last letter cannot be connected with F at all. This is a home-made travesty of Lombardic lettering, and a horizontal line at the bottom of a letter can only belong to Z or L." She began to measure the lines with a pencil. "Moreover, the letters are evenly spaced, in spite of their uncouth formation, and each word is divided from the other by two dots, which occupy the same space as a letter. *'Chief of'* contains seven letters—seven spaces—the necessary division marks for two words bring it up to nine spaces. But from the initial of 'Hammand' to the beginning of the line there's only room for seven spaces, including the double dot that remains *in situ*. It appears that instead of *'Chief of Hammand'* we have—"

She jotted on a piece of paper:

"??????: Hammand:"

"THIS is like a weekly paper puzzle," said Goddard.

"You have proved that *'Chief of'* can't be the opening of the third line, Miss Bartendale; does that mean that the missing word, or words, may alter the sense of the whole rhyme?"

"Nothing is impossible; though what you suggest does not seem unduly probable, with only six spaces for letters. We have O, C, G, Q, or S, for possible initial, and the last character can only be L or Z."

She noted down the possible combinations on the paper.

OxxxxL		OxxxxZ
CxxxxL		CxxxxZ
GxxxxL	or	GxxxxZ
QxxxxL		QxxxxZ
SxxxxL		SxxxxZ

"And, after all, it may be nothing of any moment," she concluded, pushing the paper away.

But Goddard considered it gravely. "C-r-u-e-l, that's a letter short," he said. "But they might have spelt it with ll: 'C-r-u-e-ll' Hammand."

"Obvious, but no sense," commented Luna.

"C-o-r-b-e-l," he spelt. "Much worse, let's try G. G-o-s-p-e-l; worse than ever! How about O? O-r-i-e-l, or two words: O-d-u-double l—'o, dull Hammand' isn't bad, but still without sense. The English language is copious enough when an Old Army Sergeant is dressing you down, but wonderfully restricted when it's a missing word. The Z endings I dare not tackle."

"It may not be anything," Luna repeated. She bent over the photograph again, her elbows on the table and her head on her hands. "The rest is plain: *'Where grow pines and firs amain, under stars sans—'*" She paused abruptly, and stayed as she was, her face almost hidden by her palms, her finger-tips tapping her temples. "Oh, there's no disguising it—I'm fagged out now, and this trifle is getting on my mind!" she exclaimed, raising her head and giving herself a little shake.

"You are tired to death—on our account," Oliver began, concerned.

"Fairly," she conceded. "I've done enough for the time, perhaps, but I must examine the poor dog's body."

The others all rose. She waved a forbidding hand. "No, thanks. The butler is to show me where it is. You all knew the poor fellow in life, and there's no need to harrow your feelings. I prefer to do my inspecting by myself."

It was a command, and they obeyed. She returned within half an hour. "Jove, but you look tired, Miss Bartendale!" exclaimed Oliver.

She smiled wryly. "It was not a pleasant task for an animal-lover. By the way, the police have not yet examined him, I gather?"

"No, they have wired for a Scotland Yard man."

"Well, he will not find any clues in that direction. There are no tooth-marks however, and I don't think he ever had his own teeth into anything. And now I have finished my day's work."

"But—" gasped Swanhild.

"It is a bit inconclusive," Luna completed for her as she came to a stammering stop. "Ve-ry inconclusive, but all I can do until I get a translation of the runes. On them I depend as the thread that will string together all the scattered facts we have gathered today. And I really am tired."

"But—" poor Swanhild began again, and again disappointment and dread choked her.

"Miss Bartendale's used up—on our account," said Oliver, in a big soft voice that was a command. "If you don't care to tell us your conclusions at present, Miss Bartendale, we accept your decision without question."

It was the tone of a master in his own house, a tone he had not used, in Swanhild's memory, since he became owner of Dannow. Still, out of the depths of her sudden despair and helpless fear for him she persisted.

"Then you mean to leave us helpless, Miss Bartendale?" Swanhild protested.

"By no means," answered Luna briskly. "I shall leave you fully protected against this Abnormal danger. It can be put in a sentence: you, Mr. Hammand, are alone in any danger from it, and you must not go into the hidden room or any place where pines and firs grow, by night, until you see me again."

"When will that be?" Oliver asked eagerly.

"Tomorrow. When you come to see me, all of you, and learn one of my reasons for not enlightening you further today."

"Tomorrow? Run up and see you?" he repeated, brightening.

"You are quite well enough to go about freely. Will you promise me—for your own good and your sister's peace of mind—not to do what I have forbidden you to do until I release you from the promise?"

"It's a bet. What of your address?"

"15, Bispham Gardens, Chelsea. I live with my nearest relative, Madame Yorke, the pianist. We had better pack the hilt now."

"I've a cigar box that'll fit it."

He went in search of it. "Whew!" whistled Goddard, softly. "Old Oliver's uncommonly bright and biddable all of a sudden, Swanhild!"

"I've given him something to look forward to," said Luna.

"Is that why you have put off telling us anything?" Swanhild asked.

Luna turned to her quickly. "Not, it is not," she answered. "It's merely a convenient by-product of my plan, that may keep him from brooding. I cannot tell you any more today—not even to still the anxiety of a sister who is shivering with it on her only brother's account!"

AS SHE spoke she laid her hands on Swanhild's shoulders and looked full into the girl's eyes. Her own were now neither brooding nor scintillating, but very soft and kind, and though her hands were small the touch of them sent something through Swanhild that stiffened her backbone. She did not know she had been trembling until she now felt it stop. "Trust me a little while; I beg," Luna went on. "Believe me, I know what I am about. I have dealt with similar manifestations before; though none so ancient and powerful. I am speaking to you, too, Mr. Covert," she supplemented.

Goddard laughed guiltily, without losing the sobriety of his look. "I certainly think you make too much mystery about it, Miss Bartendale," he admitted. "Moreover, I find it hard to believe you are on the right track. You are certain the secret was known before the Wars of the Roses, yet during that period the deaths were more frequent."

"They were. I don't mind telling you two what I make of this detail; then, perhaps, you will trust me better. In this world, then, every happening resolves itself into three parts—cause, agency, and effect. Effect, the visible result, agency by which that result is worked; and cause behind agency. Since Blore Heath the effects of the Monster's manifestations are all that have been known. Before that period the agency—the form the Monster had power to take for the working of the effects—was known. But the cause—the exact nature of the Monster, and why it was able to have such power in connection with the Hammand family—was not known. I suspect I have rediscovered the agency, and may possibly discover the cause."

"So you believe," he conceded grudgingly. "Only that does not explain why the disasters were most frequent when the agency was known."

"On the contrary, it does. With the best possible intention the worst possible means may have been adopted to control the agency. To use a familiar simile; the remedy was worse than the disease."

"If you find the cause can you stop the effect?" Swanhild asked eagerly.

"I don't say I can find the cause. I don't profess to be wiser than all the sages of the past, but I can try to find it in the light of new knowledge that has been added to what had been gathered when the agency was known before. Cause is sometimes incomprehensible: as the primal cause of the universe is still, though mankind has always known of its effects in nature, and exact science has latterly found out some of its agencies."

"Can you guess at the cause of it all: from your previous experiences? The generic nature of the cause, I mean?" Goddard asked.

"I can:

'To me dim shapes of anicent crime
Wail down the windy ways of Time'

and this Monster is the result of some sin that is haunting down the sinners' line from age to age. No later than tomorrow afternoon you shall have a glimpse of my methods that ought to satisfy you."

THE wind had shredded the mist away by the time Luna had to start for Hassocks, but the sky still loured. The sun, glinting through a slit in the cloud-canopy of the Downs, suggested the narrowed, flaming eye of a malicious devil, peering over the sodden grey world in search of mischief to be done in the coming night. Luna, glancing back as the motor made for the gap leading to the Weald, saw a last view of Dannow against the forbidding sky. The crack of metallic red brightness behind resembled a red-hot blade plunged through its lumpish bulk. It looked a fit casket for the abominable hand and ominous inscription hidden in its keeping.

"In common fairness you must come and see our Sussex in more cheery circumstances," said Oliver Hammand. He had insisted on joining her escort to Hassocks, only agreeing, ostensibly as a concession to his sister's natural fussiness, to go in the tonneau with the guest and the dogs. Luna turned from the dreary scene to find his grey eyes looking full at her. Bright, pleasant eyes, frankly making no effort to shift their gaze on meetings hers. "What were you thinking about Dannow?" he asked, further.

"That if I owned it I would have every stone of it carted away, the Shaw rooted up and ploughed deep, and the name of the place altered. Also I'd change my own name and go to some colony and start life afresh; away from all associations with this horrible patrimony!"

Luna was shocked at her outburst almost before she had finished speaking.

Oliver looked kindly at her. "You are tired," he said. His big round voice was itself again, and in spite of the discolouration of one temple and the bandages round his throat he radiated calm and strength.

She looked up at him and in that moment she really saw him, really realized him, for the first time.

That's how it happens in life. He had been in attendance on her since early morning, but since that early morning she had been absorbed, isolated by her work, and he had been nothing to her save a person in dire need of her peculiar services. Now, suddenly, he was no longer an abstraction—a mere unfortunate client—but a living personality. An enormous man outwardly, quiet of manner, sober but genial; with strong, refined features very like his sister's, and wide-set eyes nearly as large and beautiful as hers. Behind the outward man a nature highly strung, proud, affectionate, and emotional with that appalling form of emotionalism that eats its possessor inwardly, from his repression of all outer show of it, until it culminates in some terrible outburst.

She understood him suddenly, and through him his ancestors; those men, decent to the core, who had pined to death or killed themselves when the Monster was revealed to them.

And there was something more borne on her in that moment of meeting eyes. Something so new to her and so incredible that she thrust the bare idea out of her conscious, formulated thoughts. Only women think in thoughts—not words—in such matters, and her inner mind tossed to her outer a sentence written in one of the root-stories of the world when the bronze sword she had in her bag was new. "Her heart knew him with the knowledge of youth," it said.

"Isn't that Hassocks?" she said hastily. It was bathos, but bathos is in the best taste when an experience of the soul has reached its climax and any attempt to prolong it would vulgarize it.

"Yes, that's Hassocks," Oliver replied. He, too, realized that the commonplace was now the right and becoming note. He also knew that in that moment, in that modern car speeding over an ancient road with mist and the primaeval Downs around, the greatest and commonest of miracles had worked itself without word or touch. To him it was an inevitable, glorious fact, predestined since the world began, to be accepted in a spirit of ecstasy too great for expression.

To Luna, with her certain knowledge, it was a thing most horrible, to be thrust aside in an attempt at rebellious unbelief, the very climax of Dannow's monstrous horror.

HASSOCKS really hove into view on the cloudy horizon, and Swanhild turned to apprise her of the fact. The *vade mecum* of overtried souls, the commonplace, decreed that they had cut the time close, and the blessed bustle of securing an empty compartment, and footwarmers, and smuggling Roska in, tided Luna over the worst moments of her life.

"You think he's safe for tonight?" Swanhild whispered wistfully.

"I know he is, outside of the hidden room and the vicinity of firs and pines. Send me a wire first thing in the morning, Miss Hammand, and any other time if you think there's anything to report. And don't forget—my address at eleven tomorrow."

Swanhild received the final warning running along the platform.

Luna subsided amidst her borrowed rugs and addressed her thoughts severely to the matter in hand.

The whole matter arranged itself in its hideous Fifth Dimensional entirety. Only after a long time the name of a station gliding by apprised her of London's nearness and woke her from abstraction.

She opened the window and scattered the contents of a bulky envelope into the foggy abyss that was London's fringe of outer slums. "Only business," she said to her reflection in the mirror as she straightened her hat and touched up her perturbed features in preparation for public exhibition at Victoria.

Once past the barrier she instinctively picked out the bills of the *Evening Post's* afternoon editions:

IS IT A GHOST?
MYSTERIOUS
SUSSEX
OUTRAGE

and

DANNOW OLD MANOR
MYSTERY
INCREASES
LATEST
DETAILS

A lanky young man had got out of another compartment of her train, and was waiting by the book-stall when she reached it. There he tendered a neatly folded copy of the *Post,* surmounted by a tiny bunch of primroses nicely arranged round a little sprig of fir. "Collected at Dannow in the intervals of gathering ghastly details, dear Witch," he said, grinning.

Luna took the offering dubiously. "You

are the prince of impudent dogs; which is euphuistic for pressmen, Tommy," she returned. "We'll go shares in a taxi, and I'll promise to shed a tear when you are publicly executed."

Mr. Thomas Curtis, of the *United Press, Ltd.*, chuckled. "Some journalists deserve hanging all the time, and all journalists deserve hanging some of the time," he agreed; "but all journalists don't deserve hanging all the time, and you've always declared I'm one of the most undeserving. That's why you wired me to cover it for the *Post* directly you learnt Dannow was on the tapis—eh, dear Witch?"

"Perhaps; who knows?" agreed Luna, stepping into the cab.

He followed her.

"Just let me hear what you've made of the case so far," Luna said.

He told her, "It's been a putrid day for outdoor snaps, but I caught something of you and the afflicted family coming out of the church. I think you want this case kept quiet, dear Witch."

"I want all my cases kept as quiet as is humanly possible, dear Pressman."

"That's why you whistled me up to cover it, as usual. I've got the scoop so pluperfectly to myself that the other rags will be forced to deprecate the whole matter. Thus saving you and the victims no end of Press persecution. As you intended." He grinned at her sideways. "Witch, you can do what kings and premiers sometimes cannot—manipulate the Fourth Estate, but you can't prevent the Fourth Estate knowing it's being manipulated!"

Luna laughed back.

"Now, belovedst Witch," he went on, "can you tell me just this: if you have solved the mystery?"

"If I had I shouldn't tell."

"What if I ferret it out for myself?"

"In the interests of your firm?"

"In the interests of my firm."

"In many of my cases there's something that would make Tommy the ex-ornament of Maudlin sorry if Curtis the Pressman had to report it."

"You *have* learnt something!" he accused triumphantly. The cab had stopped now before a modest little tree-embowered house. Tommy followed her to the door with the rugs and bags. She paused before inserting her latchkey. "Tommy," she said seriously. "I've often been curious to learn the ethics of news-gathering. You are not an unmitigated bounder; what would happen if you got hold of something your birth and upbringing would incite you to hide? What, in that case, of loyalty to your firm?"

He became grave. "I'd stop short if it was an independent search, Luna, but if the firm ordered me to find out anything and it led to unexpected results, birth and breeding would go hang."

The strains of "See the Conquering Hero" floating downstairs intimated that Madame Yorke was back. She turned around now from the piano as her relative entered.

She was a big and radiant sort of woman, looking, with her white hair, peachy complexion and black eyebrows, like a girl pretending to be middle-aged.

"Don't tell me you have mastered the Dannow secret!"

"I wish I hadn't!" groaned Luna, shortly. "Of all the horrors—" She dropped limply into a chair. A cat and kitten came from the fireside to climb on her knees, Roska thrust a comforting muzzle into her hand, but she disregarded them all.

"If you want to tell me about it, do," Madame Yorke said. "It generally does you good to talk things over with someone who won't tell."

"I do want to tell you about it."

Much later, when Luna was her impassive self again, she set forth the Hammand secret in its stark hideousness. Familiarity with her housemate's experiences had almost killed the faculty of amazement in Madame Yorke, but over this her eyes opened wide. "How utterly horrible, Luna!" she gasped at the conclusion. "How will you explain to those poor youngsters? Why, it amounts to a thousand years of crime—such crime, too! An entirely new one—"

"Not new. Several people have been accused of it in the past. I remember two Sussex cases: one not much later than the Warlock's time, and one in the seventeeth century. There was a trial for it in London thirty years ago, too."

"I was going to say: an entirely new crime for the papers to bill if they learn of it. It's easy to understand why the Warlock killed himself—and your clients' grandfather, too."

Luna shrugged her shoulders. "Those were special cases. Now to ring up Professor Bergstrom about the sword."

It was her economical plan to make other people do her spadework for her. She burdened her excellent memory with the first rudiments of most sciences, just sufficient to enable her to set her various friends in different walks of learning on the track when she needed information.

"He's tumbling into a taxi to come

round," she announced presently. "Would you mind seeing him? I don't feel up to anything more tonight. I think I'll go to bed now. It's barely ten, but this has been a strenuous day, and that hidden room has taken it out of me. By the way, the professor is to know the sword was found in an old house, nothing more."

For the first time she was sorry her relative knew that a sensitive's power can only be lost through two causes—degrading sin, or that grand passion that sweeps up all powers of soul and brain into itself.

CHAPTER V

"AARON'S GOLDEN CALF—IN SUSSEX"

NEXT morning Luna did not come downstairs until Swanhild's telegram arrived. "They will be round at eleven," she informed Madame Yorke over the breakfast table. "The girl died last night. Inquest tomorrow."

"Oh!" said the elder woman, as though it were past anything but that flexible monosyllable.

Luna shrugged her shoulders. "It had to be, but it was a dispensation of Providence she survived a few hours. Otherwise—well, I've made all safe; unless those poachers get involved. Have you seen the papers?"

"I have, and I'd like to hear you converse in the way interviewers allege you converse with them, Luna. The *Daily Speculum* has a page of photos. One of you accompanied by the afflicted family and the local church, taken in dense fog. Mr. Hammand larger than the sacred edifice; his sister and her fiancé mainly boots and blurs; you a mere smudge marked with a cross; like the fatal spot on the site of a crime. Portraits of the Monster, from effigy and brass. View of local policeman. Both rhymes in heavy type."

"Nice for my clients, eh? It won't be Tommy Curtis's fault if by this hour those rhymes are not being bandied about in city trains and offices, discussed at late breakfast tables all over England, and argued about in coffee houses and bars from Berwick to Southampton. I can only pray that the *Daily Post* may not be moved to offer a prize for the best suggestion as to their exact meaning. Now I'm going out about the Hammands' business until they are due."

There was no inordinately spicy murder or divorce current that week, so, although Curtis had skimmed the cream of it, the late morning and early afternoon editions of all the papers were billing the *Dannow Mystery,* alias the *Sussex Horror,* blatantly. The news of Kate Stringer's death was in the Stop Press columns. When Luna's taxi drew up behind the Hammand car, the maid was engaged in turning away three reporters from the front door. She had to stop and snub them all round while paying the driver, and by the time she entered the drawing room her three visitors had had time to get on intimate terms with her relative.

Oliver was the first to jump up and greet her. He looked uncommonly big in the little

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

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room, and uncommonly hale and normal but for the ugly liver-coloured splotch on his temple. His grave, wide-set eyes beamed down on her as he enfolded her hand between his own. "You don't appear the worse for your exertions on our behalf yesterday," he said cheerily. Then the light died in his eyes.

"You've got Swan's wire?" he added.

"I have. It was no more than I expected."

"If I hadn't fought off the thing from myself—" His eyes became absent. They stared into Luna's, unseen by those behind him, with a blank, awakening horror in them, as the morbid thought brooding at the back of his brain came to conscious expression. "You know, Miss Bartendale, the sacrifice must be completed—"

Swanhild's eyes sought Luna's over her brother's shoulder, anxious appeal behind their outer calm.

"That's quite enough, Mr. Hammand," said Luna sharply. "What is done cannot be undone. You are not responsible for the past, but you are for the future. Your duty, therefore, is to help me make sure that no more mischief may be done in time to come, not to waste your strength in useless repinings."

Her words and tone acted like magic on him. He stiffened visibly. Swanhild's eyes brightened, Madame Yorke looked at him, and at her niece at the same time, with the amiably blank expression that indicates acute observation.

"There!" quoth Goddard. "That's what I've been trying to din into your stupid head, Oliver! Perhaps you'll believe me now the omniscient Miss Bartendale has set her seal on it."

"I believed you all right," replied Oliver; "only sometimes one can't live, or think, up to one's beliefs."

"When working to fulfill them one can," declared Luna.

"What of the runes, Miss Bartendale?" Swanhild asked eagerly.

"Patience." Luna smiled at her. "They are still unread, though my Professor sat up all night over them. We consulted the British Museum Keeper of Scandinavian Antiquities this morning. They are a new form, but my authorities agree they approximate to the Flemlose Stone inscription. Which is Danish, of about 700 A.D."

Swanhild looked plainly disappointed.

"I thought you said the sword dated back somewhere B.C., Miss Bartendale?" said Goddard.

"The bronze part does. The gold plates are a later addition. Yet I feel in my bones that in that inscription the clue lies. We are to send photos of it to various savants and—we shall see."

"What about what you are to tell us today?" asked Swanhild.

"You shall help with the preliminaries, dear girl, if you'll come with me while my aunt amuses the men for a little while."

"I help you—"

"Exactly." She slipped an arm through the girl's, and turned to the door. "As one of the two remaining descendants of Magnus the Warlock you may be a priceless help. Come, the sooner we begin the sooner your legitimate curiosity will be slaked."

OLIVER watched their exit complacently, but Goddard's face was somewhat stern, as it had been all through the interview. He felt he could not utterly trust Luna until her many small mysteries were explained.

In about half an hour the maid summoned all three to Luna's consulting room, for it was understood that the Sensitive had no professional secrets from her relative. The room was a small one, furnished severely with a divan and big desk, bookcases, and chairs that were evidently intended to keep the sitters awake and attentive to business. It was darkly papered, and the London day was a dull one. Swanhild looked uneasy and as nervously expectant as she ever permitted herself to look. Luna was her business self, cool, and quietly aloof. "You have something to tell us?" said Oliver.

"No. I want to learn what you can tell me, after I have put you in a hypnotic sleep."

He stared. "Why, what can I tell you?"

"What the Warlock knew about the Monster, perhaps."

"But I know nothing of what the old chap knew."

"Consciously you don't. Still, you are one of his descendants, your brain is descended from his, and in some nook of it may be hidden the information that will explain much to us."

He blinked, then understanding came to his eyes. "Oh, you'll summon his spirit—"

"I thought I mentioned I haven't the impudence to pry into the next world without invitation. It's what the Warlock's spirit did with the brain that I want to find out. People in hypnosis can sometimes remember what they cannot in a normal waking state."

"Oh, by Jove! I don't quite see your

game, Miss Bartendale, but of course I'm in your hands. But must you mesmerise me? It's so—so undignified, you know."

"You are thinking of mountebank public exhibitions. You will only sit in that chair and answer the questions I put to you; as Miss Hammand did just now."

"What?" It was Goddard who almost shouted the questioning exclamation. "Swanhild! You never allowed yourself to be hypnotised?"

"Why not? I simply went to sleep and remembered nothing till I woke."

"Mesmerism is a risky and unreliable process."

He stopped, conscious that—since Swanhild had been hypnotised—it was too late to protest.

"My dear chap, Miss Luna Bartendale knows her business," said Oliver reprovingly. "I say, Miss Bartendale, why did you try Swan first?"

"To see if she would serve. She was unable to answer a single question, so I must try you, if you agree."

"I've told you I'm in your hands, under your guidance wherever it may lead."

His voice was round and steady, a scintillating gleam of red shone at the back of his eyes. Luna's shone back, lambently blue. They stood quietly facing one another, but both felt as though they had jumped up and joined hands, as people might do with a dark and unknown road to be gallantly dared before them. "It will lead back through the ages till we meet the Warlock," she answered.

They were alone for a moment. The glorious isolation passed as she spoke. She waved him to a chair facing the window. "Oblige me by looking at this until further orders, Mr. Hammand," she said. "Now to summon the Warlock through the back of my watch!"

A tense, waiting silence ensued.

LUNA had placed her watch, burnished back up, in Oliver's hand as it rested on his knee. "You shall now see the processes and hear the questions I used with you, Miss Hammand," she observed aside to Swanhild.

Oliver looked at the metal steadily. At the end of four minutes Luna spoke. "How do you feel now?" she asked.

"A little fagged, Miss Bartendale."

"It's your eyes that are tired," she returned in a casual tone. "How they blink! You have difficulty in keeping them open, I see."

He began to blink violently. "You can close them, but not open them, she went on conversationally.

They closed. "You cannot open them, but try to do so," she purred on.

From the twitching of the surrounding muscles he evidently tried to obey. "I can't do it," he observed. "Yet I'm trying for all I'm worth. It's ridiculous."

"Then we'll end it." She gently fanned his eyelids with one hand, and they opened.

"You made me keep my eyes shut, but you didn't do or ask anything," he said, blinking. "I heard all you said."

"It was only a preliminary test. Now please look me in the eyes and count a hundred."

He complied.

"How do you feel now?" she asked.

"A bit fagged."

"Of course you do. You can scarcely keep your eyes open. How the lids are twitching!"

Here his lids began to twitch.

"It's hard for you to keep awake," she proceeded, crooningly. "I see your eyes are closing—they are closed—"

His eyes closed, and he collapsed limply in the chair.

"Everything is running away from you—you cannot collect your thoughts—you cannot open your eyes—you are asleep."

And asleep Oliver now appeared to be.

She took the wrist of his least injured arm and extended the limb.

"You cannot put your arm down," she said, and left it stretched. "You can open your eyes, and can hear, but you must pay no attention to anyone but me."

His eyes opened; their expression was something between that of a sleepwalker and the sightless. They followed her as she stepped to the desk and took up a notebook. "He is an excellent subject," she observed.

"I thought nervy and hysterical people were the best ones," said Swanhild.

"An error. Speak to him, Miss Hammond."

"Are you comfortable, Oliver dear?" she asked.

He took no notice.

"I have him in perfect control." Luna smiled at her look of dismay. "He is now in what is known as profound hypnosis. This is exactly the process I followed with you; let us see if he will answer more satisfactorily than you did." She seated herself opposite him. "In a normal state his arm would be tired and shake by now. Put down your arm," she ordered, and he com-

plied. "I want to know what you remember of English history, Mr. Hammand."

She proceeded to ask him many questions, working back from the reign of George V, through the Guelph and Stuart dynasties. Some of the queries were simple, as Swanhild and Goddard could tell, some were beyond their knowledge. The simple ones he answered without hesitation, in a flat voice, the others after more or less consideration. When Charles I was mentioned a flicker of interest came into his eyes. "The Martyr," he said, promptly.

"Very good," Luna assented. "We will go further back. Do you remember Mary Tudor, the Queen?"

"Mary—Mary Tudor? Ah, yes, Bloody Mary. I—I seem to remember—"

He paused uncertainly. "Think about her and her times for three minutes," Luna ordered.

He remained staring blankly before him, his forehead gradually developing wrinkles. At the end of three minutes by the clock he spoke. "I have thought of her."

"And have you thought of Derek Carver?"

She rapped the question out suddenly. He started and sat up rigid. "Derek Carver!" he exclaimed. "Bloody Mary the Queen—and Derek Carver! I know the name. Derek Carver—and something else. Something horrible. A scent—a clean, horrible scent—and heat—and something else horrible. Derek Carver—good Lord, what's the horror about Derek Carver?"

The blankness had given place to unutterable terror in his eyes. Sweat broke out on his forehead; the fingers on his unbandaged hand twitched convulsively; his whole big body shook. He had all the appearance of a man struggling with nightmare or an agonizing thought. Swanhild started from her chair to go to him, but Madame Yorke's hand laid on her wrist made her drop back again, trembling a little in sympathy with her brother. Luna's face was set like a mask, her lips folded to a hard line.

"Mary the Queen, Derek Carver," she said.

"I know!" he cried. "A scent—the same scent there was at Streatham when we came up to-day. They were tarmacing a byroad. Oh, yes, it was boiling tar—no—burning tar! Burning tar, and burning wood—and people burning. Tar burning, and people burning—Heavens, it is horrible!"

"Forget it and wake!" she ordered, waving her hand lightly past his forehead.

HE SHUT his eyes, shivered, opened them, and stared round, blinking like a man newly roused from sleep. "Really, I feel—" he began, putting his hand to his forehead. "Have I been asleep? I remember now. I looked into your eyes, Miss Bartendale, until they seemed to grow, and fill the world, and swallow me up like a great pale wave. And then I don't remember any more. Only waking."

She opened a big book, where a sheet of foolscap, covered with typing, served as marker; read the sheet down and glanced at a page of the book. "Capital!" she exclaimed, and turned with alacrity. "Look in my eyes again, Mr. Hammand."

He obeyed, and in a few moments sank back asleep as before. "Open your eyes," she commanded. "We go on where we left off."

"Mary Tudor—and Carver—and the tar burning—" He looked at her with growing horror in his expression.

"Mary's gone—forget her!" Luna's voice rang out commandingly. "We have passed to Henry Tudor; Harry of Richmond. Think of Harry of Richmond and a double-handed sword. Of what does that combination remind you?"

"Of Magnus the Warlock keeping the standard at Bosworth."

"Very good; think of Magnus the Warlock. Of what else does his name remind you, beside the big sword?"

"Of lots of things." Oliver was not excited now, he spoke in a quietly considering way. "His tomb, and the hidden room, and the painting—"

"Think carefully, and repeat everything in order as it occurs to you. The tomb makes you think of the hidden room?"

"No, of the portrait. The portrait recalls the room it is in, that room recalls the other room in the same house—the hidden one. And the hidden room recalls what we found there yesterday. The hand and the hilt."

"And of what does the hand remind you?"

He considered a moment. "Of nothing."

"Did it belong to the Warlock?"

"You said you thought so."

"Never mind anything I may have said. Think of the time of Harry Tudor, the Seventh Henry, and Magnus the Warlock who lived in Dannow at the time"

Her face was very white now, and the inner corners of her eyebrows were raised and compressed together, as though with mental strain. "What does the hand suggest?" she repeated.

"Nothing," he replied, deprecatingly. "Oh, the bronze sword!"

"Then the bronze sword—of what does it remind you?"

Evidently he was racking his memory. "Of something, but I can't quite grasp what."

She opened a drawer of the desk, took the bronze hilt out of a nest of cotton wool, and placed it in his hand. "Look at it," she ordered. "Feel it, smell it, and tell me of what it reminds you."

Obediently he turned it over, stared at it, and held it to his nose. "I know," he announced. "It reminds me of a scent, of a scent that is in this room."

Even Luna seemed a little astonished. He sat for a moment with his face raised, breathing lightly—as sensible people do when trying to locate a scent—then he rose and marched straight to the desk. There he pointed to a little glass that held Tommy Curtis's stolen offering. "That," he pronounced, with satisfaction. "Pine. That's it, only very big, over my head and all round. A grove of pines. And the sword. Pines and the sword. And something else. Three things altogether. Pines one, the sword, two, and the third—oh, two things really, but exactly alike. Long and thin and shining. Shining."

He stared round in perplexity. "Oh!" he cried, and stepped up to Swanhild. She watched him breathlessly, with dread in her eyes. He pointed to her head. "Hair' he said, triumphantly. "Bright golden hair. Plaited. Two plaits, thick as my arm. Each with a long curl at the end. And near them something else. The sword, the pines, the golden pigtails, and—oh, now I remember."

In the air he drew a sign. "A swastika!" exclaimed Luna.

"We called it a different thing," he replied vaguely.

"Fylfot?"

"Yes, fyl-fot."

"And can you read the writing on the sword-hilt?"

"No."

"Do you know what it is?"

"Runes. You told me." He inspected the broken weapon critically. "There's more writing, on what's left of the blade. Under the verdegris."

Luna stared at him and put her hand up to her forehead. A mild look of distress came to his face. "*Sufficit*, Luna," said Madame Yorke, quietly.

Luna pulled herself together. "Sit down again," she commanded, and when he had obeyed she flicked her fingers over his eyelids, and: "Wake! Forget all and wake!" she said.

He woke very quietly, blinking and then looking round with placid interest in his eyes. "You look awfully tired, Miss Bartendale!" he observed with concern.

"I stopped the sitting, as it had gone on long enough," Madame Yorke took on herself to reply. "This sort of thing is wearing to both operator and subject; though they may not realize it at the time; and a woman who owns a clever niece ought to take care of it."

"Quite so!" he agreed, with emphasis. "Let me see, I don't seem to remember anything since your eyes swallowed me up as before, Miss Bartendale."

Now Swanhild found her voice. "Miss Bartendale," she exclaimed, "who told you we both had a mild antipathy to the smell of hot tar?"

"Nobody," replied Luna. "I didn't know it. What caused it?"

"It's hereditary, our father and grandfather had it, too."

"Indeed. You knew of it, but didn't know the cause. I found the cause without knowing of it. That antipathy, Miss Hammond, began with the son of the Warlock and the Marian persecution of 1555. While I put my notes in order please give Mr. Hammand an account of what he said in answer to my questions, and then I shall give you a lecture on the science of Ancestral Autobiography as applied to our investigation."

SWANHILD'S account was full and exact. At the conclusion: "Golden pigtails!" Oliver repeated, and he seemed a little shocked over it.

"Now, in your normal waking state, do you remember anything of them?" asked Luna.

"Only—let me see. Oh, yes, Swan as a flapper. But she only had one."

"The pair were in connection with the sword."

"Then I don't know anything about them."

"The Warlock did. And in a hypnotic sleep you recollected it."

His eyes lit with sudden intelligence. "You mean I'm the reincarnation of the Warlock?"

"Reincarnation, as an explanation of mental phenomena, is as easy and unprovable as Spiritualism," she replied, with a laugh. "I don't deal in easy and unprovable theories. Come, let's get round

the fire comfortably, and I'll explain how I tapped your *hereditary memory.*

"The brain is a vehicle for the registering of thoughts, emotions, accidents, encountered by the body or brought into being by the owner's spirit," she began, when they were settled. "Every experience and emotion makes a record of itself in the substance of the brain; records deeply or lightly impressed, according to their importance to the owner of the brain. They cause an alternation in the convolutions of its substance. Some of the alternations are soon obliterated, some last through the owner's lifetime, some will last for centuries—may last to the end of time. Do you follow me?"

"Ye—es." Oliver hesitated. "But, you know, a brain does not last for centuries."

"Its descendants do. Generation after generation. Some experiences—superhuman sorrows or joys, ecstatic religiosity, acute fear—can make a difference in part of the brain so powerful that it is reproduced in the brains of the owner's children, and their children after them, indefinitely."

"I begin to see what you're driving at."

"But hereditary memories, as a rule, lie dormant unless they happen to be awakened by some outer circumstance similar to that in which the original impression was received."

"Jove! I see!" he exclaimed. "That antipathy to the smell of hot tar, now?"

"It is an unconscious memory of when your ancestor, the Warlock's son, was profoundly shocked in heart, soul and brain, when he saw the burning of the Lewes Martyrs in 1555. Scents are the most subtle agents for awakening memory. The scent of hot tar, in your case, awakes a vague, faint sense of mental discomfort, too dim to be even defined as fear or horror, though the cause has been long forgotten. Only in a state of hypnotic sleep, Mr. Hammand, your memory is strengthened so that you can put that cause into definite words. You recognized the name of one of the men who were burnt at Lewes and at once connected it with burning tar, and exhibited all the symptoms of extreme horror."

"Has that anything to do with finding out about the Monster?" Swanhild put in.

"Everything and nothing to do with it. It was a test, and it has proved I am on the right track. I'll explain, and you will then understand why I have made a minor mystery of this day's work. I laid my plans yesterday, as soon as I learnt you had neither of you ever looked at the pedigree of 1650. On that pedigree are notes respecting the Monster's appearances, and also about notable members of the family. The note about the Warlock's son, Godfrey, states that he turned Protestant in the reign of Mary, being converted by witnessing the terrible death and unshaken constancy of his friend, Master Derek Carver. During luncheon I ascertained that neither of you had ever read the names of the Lewes martyrs on their memorial, though you had often seen it in Lewes.

"I considered that the shock which could make a man of family change his religion in Mary's days might have been profound enough to transmit some echo to his descendants. Accordingly, this morning I phoned the British Museum and ordered a professional 'reader' to find out all about Carver. His *précis* was ready when I called for it; I put it away in that copy of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs,* and read it over *after I had ascertained what you remembered of the matter.* After putting you in trance I so roused your memory of Mary's reign that the mere mention of Carver's name waked a vivid recollection of the martyrdom of your ancestor's friend. I then read the *précis,* and found your recollection remarkably accurate."

"Why didn't you read it before?"

"Because unconscious thought-transference is one of the dangers of this sort of investigation. If I had known all about it I might have unintentionally made you say what I knew myself."

"What had the smell of tar to do with it?" asked Oliver.

"Let us look at the *précis.*" She read aloud:

" 'Derek Carver, a Flemish Protestant refugee. Settled in Brighton, where he owned and worked the Black Lion Brewery in Black Lion Street. He was condemned for heresy in 1555. Particulars will be found in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the Martyrs.* He was executed at Lewes, before the "Star" Inn. Was burnt at the stake, *in a barrel of tar,* his Bible—' "

Both Oliver and Swanhild uttered a simultaneous exclamation of horror. Luna put the paper down. "That's all we need to know," she said gravely. "Yes, it's apparently a far cry from a prosperous Brighton tradesman dying for his faith in the sixteenth century and you youngsters feeling vaguely uncomfortable at the scent of tarmac on a road in the twentieth century, but the connection is direct. I found the connection—and perhaps you

begin to understand my methods now?"

SWANHILD leant forward, an unusual light in her eyes. "You found that Oliver recollected the incident; when you waked his memory in the right way. It follows you may be able to rouse his memory of what our ancestors knew of the Monster. That's it, isn't it?"

"Exactly," replied Luna. "There are layers of memory, so to put it, and I have worked back to the Warlock."

Oliver leant forward, too, his face acutely eager. "I see all now. What do you say, Goddard? Miss Bartendale knows her business, eh?"

Goddard inclined his head gravely. "I never doubted she did. It was the secrecy I—er—commented on."

"My dear Mr. Covert, don't you understand that yet?" Luna turned to him. "My object is to find what's in Mr. Hammand's memory, not to put ideas into his head beforehand. The Carver test had to be administered without warning. If I had told him of it beforehand, with the best will in the world he would have thought of it until the time came, and would have unconsciously invented particulars to oblige me with. Taking him without preparation I got the plain truth."

"I understand, if Goddard doesn't," declared Oliver sturdily. "Then you worked back and found out I remember something that happened to the Warlock in connection with the sword and a pair of golden pigtails. Now, what on earth could those things mean?"

"I have a faint suspicion, founded on previous researches of my own," answered Luna. "After finding out what we can of the Warlock's contributions to your dormant memory we shall go further back, in search of—never mind what."

"It's marvelous!" he exclaimed. "More wonderful than any tales of magic! Going through a fellow's mind as though one were turning the pages of a book backward. I say, Miss Bartendale, the Warlock met the Monster. That must have impressed him as much as Carver's death did his son."

Luna shook her head. "The task is not going to be so enviably easy. He died a few days after the meeting, and all his children were born some years before that. An idea cannot be passed on unless it is in the parent's mind before the child is born."

"Oh, I see. You must work back until you reach someone who learnt about it before his kids were born."

"It looks like it. The task will take some time, for an hour a day is as long as I care to keep anyone in hypnosis. Therefore I hope you will afford me one hour for a few days to follow."

"You have to command. Every day we'll run up until further orders."

"I am of no use?" said Swanhild.

"Apparently not, and I am sorry."

"It seems curious," said Oliver. "You'd think a woman's more sensitive mind would hold impressions best."

"A normal woman's mind isn't more sensitive than a normal man's. It only seems so because a woman is physically more highly strung. In the present case the explanation is simple. Hereditary memory, like other hereditary traits, sometimes plays tricks, often lying dormant for a long time, and often only showing full development in one person in every generation. Like the extra finger or singular teeth in some families. However, Miss Hammand, you have something to do to help the work. In old houses like yours one never knows what may turn up after diligent search. I want you to dragoon every lumber room, chest, and drawer in your home, in search of old papers. I learnt from the mss. you showed me yesterday that the great *savant* and astrologer Nicholas Culpeper investigated the Monster in 1651; he may have written a report, and some scraps of it may be extant."

Swanhild brightened. "There's any amount of lumber rooms," she said.

"Very good. Now we have a threefold search going on: you ransacking the manor, several savants combing out Scandinavian archaeology, I turning Mr. Hammand's mind inside out. To-morrow I shall be down at Dannow."

Oliver brightened. "I want to hear what's said at the inquest," she explained. "And I hereby declare the session closed; it is near the witching hour of two, just time for a cigarette and a change of subject before lunch. Whatever we do we must avoid mental staleness or overbrooding in this work."

THE next day saw the public interest in Dannow in spate. Although Curtis had made such a scoop of it, it was too rich and varied for other pressmen to neglect. Freelance journalists resuscitated old articles on ghostly matters from the "rejected" drawers of their desks, and sold them at once. Junior reporters put in a spare hour in the nearest reference library, and

amassed enough information during it to publish authoritative articles on Black Masses, Magic, Elementals, Family Banes, and the like, and sign them: "By a Well Known Occultist," or "By a Distinguished Psychic Expert." And the current specimen of the *Daily Post's* celebrated brand of serials introduced a chapter obviously founded on the Thunderbarrow Shaw happenings into that day's instalment.

Dannow district was overrun with pressmen, morbid curiosity-mongers, souvenir hunters—who hacked all the bark off the beech and the oak on which the dog's body had struck—amateur detectives, and misguided individuals who mistook a degenerate taste in the gruesome for occult gifts. The Hammands were pestered in their own grounds by would-be interviewers and Oliver received fourteen requests for contributions on the subject of his family traditions from various periodicals and a cable from New York offering an incredible sum for a photograph of the hidden room.

These matters Swanhild imparted, indignantly, to Luna when they met her at Hassocks. Directly after, while Oliver spoke to the stationmaster, she added a rapturous whisper. Oliver turned and smiled at her indulgently. "I didn't need to hear what you said, Swan," he observed. "You were telling Miss Bartendale I'm very well and cheerful considering. Did you mention that you spent the night on my doormat?"

"Where is the inquest to be, Mr. Hammand?" asked Luna.

"The Hammand Arms, at Lower Dannow." His face clouded. "I'd actually forgotten why you've come, for a minute."

"Come, come, no useless brooding!" she chided. "You can help it."

"I can. Only I feel so indecently happy when I let myself go. And when I think of Kate—and poor Warren—" he ended indecisively.

Dannow suggested an *al fresco* motor and cycle exhibition. The late war, and press exploitation thereof, has much increased that class of humanity that takes its pleasure in gloating over the details of other people's sordid crimes or revolting accidents, and it was well represented; together with reporters, spiritualists, and other concomitants of an incomplete world. Oliver smuggled his party in by devious back lanes to the disappointment of a double line of cameras and three cinema operators.

The proceedings were little more than formal, as the police wished to follow up the customary clue. A rumour that Miss Bartendale, the renowned psychic expert, would give evidence, proved erroneous. Luna followed the proceedings behind the shelter of a veil that did not allow anyone to judge if they really interested her. She sat next to Warren, who was as inscrutable until the Ades appeared.

The jury looked more or less ill after viewing the body. No overt reference was made as to the possibility of a supernatural explanation of the tragedy, beyond a short speech at the start, in which the coroner bade the jury dismiss from their minds certain absurd rumours that were current. The circumstances with which they were concerned were very material, he pointed out, and to these circumstances attention must be confined.

The doctors concerned ascribed death to the injuries. Deceased was never in a fit state to give an account of what happened. In delirium she constantly raved of "something as big as a house" that she imagined was attacking her. The injuries were the result of an attack by some large animal. The wounds were too badly mauled to afford any data with respect to the assailant's formation of jaw. They might possibly have been inflicted by a very large dog. Dr. Newton disposed of the idea that Mr. Hammand's dog might have been responsible for them. He had examined the animal's body, and it had not swallowed anything but a dog biscuit for some time before death, whereas the injuries—

These injuries, coldly detailed, afforded a big sop to the public love of sensation. Swanhild described the finding of the girl. Oliver gave a brief account of his experience, merely stating that he felt something approach in the dark, fought blindly, and fell. Cross-examined by a sporting farmer on the jury he said the mastiff barked in a friendly way when near the girl, his memory of what ensued was confused—it *might* have warned him of the assailant's coming.

WILL CLADPOLE described the unnatural noise he had heard from the Shaw, and how he had summoned Swanhild. He was succeeded by the Ades.

They were the most interesting witnesses to those who held to a material explanation of the affair. Warren paid the closest, unfriendly attention to every word and look of the two. In two days he had gone down to skin and bones; and he watched the brothers with a fixed gaze under which they were soon come to dire

"The Einheirar are risen . . . horses trampling, harness chiming, friend calling friend. . . !"

confusion. They were a pair of ordinary, hulking country louts, incapable of lying with conviction, and had made the mistake of concocting an edited account of the night's doings in order to discount the seriousness of their poaching arrangements. In consequence they were soon involved in a web of counter-statements, and the coroner found it necessary to caution both. They were dismissed after making a very bad impression, and the inquiry was adjourned for ten days.

The manor party waited in the landlady's private sanctum while the first press dispersed. Luna stared silently through the window overlooking the road, until the Ades passed and loiterers peered and pointed after them. "A factor in the problem, those two," she said, meeting Oliver's inquiring look.

"You surely don't think they—" He stopped, astounded.

"I don't, but the police and population seem to entertain different ideas. Well, that I can't help, for the time, though I know those fellows were not the agents of the Undying Monster."

"Then why don't you clear them?" asked Swanhild.

"Because to reveal anything about the Monster's Fifth Dimensional nature at present will benefit nobody and ruin all my plans. Unless they are officially accused I decree silence."

"They're my tenants—" begun Oliver.

"Exactly, but they're not mine, thank goodness! I cannot produce my evidence at present, but when I can—" She shut her mouth firmly, and the others knew better than to ask any more questions. From the window could be seen the Beacon; a number of people, daring in daylight and company, were swarming up it. "What was that tale about Thunder's Barrow you referred to, Mr. Hammand?" she asked suddenly.

Oliver looked at Goddard. "Oh, I know," said Goddard. "It's nothing to do with the Monster though, Miss Bartendale. Merely a vague yarn about Aaron's Golden Calf being buried in it."

"Aaron's Golden Calf?" repeated Luna. "In Sussex?"

Oliver nodded. "Why not? You never know what you'll find if you scratch the surface of our extensive and peculiar county of Sussex. They found a sky-blue skeleton in Beeding Level, a canoe left over from the Flood at Northiam and a solid amber teacup of the time of Adam at Hove; not to mention the pre-Adamite person—half a jawbone and a Christian name, according to the papers—at Piltdown."

"Some people say the Golden Calf is in the Trundle over Goodwood racecourse," Goddard supplemented. "I'm sure our Barrow's a more respectable situation."

"I didn't know you knew so much before, Goddard," said Swanhild.

"I had seven years' start of you. You came too late for the local fun. In cottages now the main talk is about Sunday paper scandals and football competitions; in my kidhood I've spent priceless hours listening to old folk chat about ghosts and buried treasure, smuggling, and hanging in chains."

Luna seemed to wake out of a reverie, and asked: "If a golden figure is there, why has nobody secured it?"

Goddard chuckled. "Because the Poor Man shifts it out of reach if anyone digs. 'Poor Man,' Miss Bartendale, is polite Sussex-ese for the Enemy of Mankind. It's nothing to help you, I'm afraid."

"Perhaps not," she assented. "Only I'm by way of being an expert in traditions, and this is a curious one. Aaron's Calf—in Sussex. It's a queer combination, and the more *outré* a tradition is the more the expert wonders what originated it. Tomorrow we will have the second sitting."

CHAPTER VI

"IN THE NAMES OF THE ASA GODS—"

FOR many ensuing days the Dannow mystery continued to reign paramount in public interest. After the inquest the Monster's victim was buried; next day photographs of the ceremony were in all the papers. By the end of the week publicity reached high-tide mark, and for the first time in living memory Dannow Church had to be locked in daylight; the Warlock's tomb having been disgracefully chipped by relic hunters and the whole building littered with the cigarette ends, matches, odd papers and other trade marks of the travelling masses. Every day Swanhild had two anxious times. The first every morning, between waking and her first sight of Oliver. Oliver's matutinal greeting became a formula:

"When I remember what's under the bump on my brow I'll tell you, old thing, but I don't at present."

The other was during each sitting, while she waited with silent dread for what Luna's questions would elicit. Oliver was

in excellent spirits, except when he happened to remember the other victim, and when they went up to London it was usually late before they returned, owing to his frank unwillingness to tear himself away from the Yorke-Bartendale abode. What was left of the day was invariably spent in ransacking every nook of Dannow, though at first they found nothing vital.

On Thursday, Luna, after putting Oliver in hypnosis, concentrated his attention on the bronze sword, of which she still had charge. She endeavoured to learn if he remembered anything of the inscription he had declared was on the blade. He said he could not remember it, but was sure it existed. She showed him photographs of various runic scripts, but he could recognise none.

On Friday Luna came to Dannow, with the hilt, and held the sitting in the hidden room. She led him very carefully back to the Warlock's time, and gave him both hand and hilt to examine. He remembered quite suddenly that the blade belonging to the hilt lay near the pigtails and fylfot, measured the length of it along his arm, and said it was leaf-shaped and green with verdegris. She made no comment.

It all seemed foolish and futile. Only Swanhild knew that behind the apparent futility Luna was working towards some end that was perfectly visible to the keen brain behind the diamond eyes and golden curls. Swanhild's trust was implicit, but essentially personal. In Luna's presence an atmosphere of normal life, of steady work towards some seen goal, braced her, but away from the other woman's influence the subconscious sense of abnormal horror brooding over Dannow and keeping its shadow over her brother and herself—the last Hammands—settled down immovably.

Oliver did not reason about anything; he simply surrendered himself to what he regarded as marking time until Luna should be ready to reveal her purpose. He was content to wait, nobody mentioned the dead girl in his hearing if possible, and he had the supreme happening of any lifetime to occupy his head and heart.

Goddard's feelings were tinged with a distrust that induced the persistent feeling of a pause before some tremendous happening; like the hush before a storm.

On Saturday Swanhild and Oliver came to Chelsea very early. Oliver with the stain of the bruise—which had been liver colour the day before—suddenly faded from his temple; Swanhild in a state of suppressed excitement.

"Well?" asked Luna. "Something's up?"

"A reference to the Monster and Nichlas Culpeper's signature!" answered Swanhild, producing an envelope and tenderly extracting two fragments of thick paper, frayed and yellow with age. With some difficulty Luna read the faded words on them.

"'. . . *that the Hammands are of a breed vampyrish, and if one be slaine prematurely he shall goe to neither Heaven nor Hell, but live unnatural in ye grave . . .*'—that's important, Miss Hammand! And, let me see ' . *your most afft, frd, Nick. Culpep . .* ' This is priceless. Where were they?"

"In the seat of an old chair. There was a tear and a bit of the stuffing poking out."

"Some handy and economical ancestor of ours must have done the job himself, for there's three chairs and a sofa all stuffed with written papers," Oliver supplemented.

LUNA restored the scraps to their shelter. "The misery for which economy has always been responsible!" she sighed. "Are there any more pieces of this sheet, Miss Hammand?"

"We don't know yet. There's five clothes baskets full already of what we got out of one chair and the sofa. It's all in scraps and, as the furniture was stored where the roof leaks, a lot of it is in lumps almost like papier mâché. Goddard has stopped behind to try and separate some of it; he spotted the signature first, and we found the other bit when we split a lump. We're going back early to examine the rest of the disused furniture."

"Kindly speak for yourself, Swanhild," interposed Oliver. "You promised Goddard to go hunting, but I'm otherwise engaged."

"Otherwise engaged?" repeated Swanhild.

"My dear girl, you don't seem to understand that these sittings are a great strain for the principals. You looked utterly used up yesterday, Miss Bartendale. I'm sure you need a half-holiday as badly as I do myself, so I've booked stalls for *Chu Chin Chow* this afternoon. You mentioned you are one of its votaries. I knew it was no use asking you, Madame Yorke, you told me yesterday you have a concert on to-day."

Luna consulted an engagement book. Her aunt answered drily, "I distinctly remember you asking me yesterday if I had any engagement for to-day, Mr. Hammand."

Oliver looked her in the eyes and grinned winningly. Her own mouth twitched, but she straightened it and turned her gaze on Luna, who was studying the book intently.

"Have you booked stalls, Oliver?" said Swanhild.

"There's such a thing as a telephone. Now, Swan, you know you can't keep your eye on me for every minute of the rest of our lives! You mean well, but it's getting on my nerves a bit. You don't suppose we stopped at Clarkson's to get my eye toned down just to go and grub in an attic, do you? Miss Bartendale will take care of me, and pack me off to Victoria for the 6:30—that is, if you can spare the time to help me with my holiday, Miss Bartendale."

Luna announced that she could spare the time. Madame Yorke obviously dissembled surprise and disapproval. Swanhild remained silent after her half-hinted protest; she was used to the men of her family having their own way for good or ill. Luna checked Oliver's simple rejoicing over her acceptance by switching on her professional manner and ordering a move to the consulting-room. The sitting that day was short, and the net result was a repetition of Oliver's previous description of the missing blade, and his recollecting that the runic inscription on it was sunk in a meandering band.

A letter postmarked Dublin awaited Luna on her return that afternoon. "Luna, why did you go with Mr. Hammand?" demanded her aunt, over the dinner table.

"Auntie, am I the woman to decline a proffered bite of a child's sugar-stick?"

"You aren't, normally, the woman to trifle with anyone's feelings."

"If I had refused to accept this little attention from Mr. Hammand, when I tell the truth he would think I avoided him—"

"You should. That poor lad is the kind to take things hard, for all his stolid exterior."

"That's it. He's taking that girl's death hard, subconsciously, all the time." Luna flushed, then paled, as she saw in her mind's eye a picture of some hours before. The interior of a taxi speeding from His Majesty's, murky London outside, Oliver's eyes sparkling as he told her he was almost grateful to the Monster, then clouding with pity and horror and self-approach as he added, "If it wasn't for Kate!"

"To put off telling them much longer would be the bitterest refinement of cruelty."

"Business is sometimes cruel to be kind. However, as there was the first spasm of a loathsome murder in the papers to-day, and to-morrow is Sunday, our investigation moves on a stage towards explanation.

"Luna!"

"The two facts mean that the Hammands' private affairs will interest the public less the day after to-morrow, and on it Dannow should be fairly free from sightseers. Accordingly I shall wire my clients not to come up to-morrow, and write to warn them to have a gang of labourers ready on Monday morning. Then I purpose to open Thunder's Barrow in search of what I hope to find there. Will you come with me? I must oversee the opening from the first sod, and it may take more than one day. I know our young friends have been urging you to urge me to take you down for a country visit. No, that is not a sudden freak. My Irish savant has read the gold runes, and in the Barrow something I want may be waiting."

THE early train had just disembarked Madame Yorke, Luna, Roska, and a pile of luggage on Monday morning when Oliver and Swanhild arrived at Hassocks. "Luna warned you in her letter that we fear we shall have to inflict ourselves on you for the night, Miss Hammand," the elder lady said. "She thinks the digging may last all day."

"It may take several days at least," replied Oliver, with conviction. "Goddard is drumming up labour, in accordance with your instructions, Miss Bartendale. Isn't it all rather sudden?"

"It's a job to be done and done with before the workers have time to talk about it. I'll explain in the car."

It had snowed a little, hailed a little, and rained a great deal the previous day, but this morning had turned out mild and muddy. A delicate vapour eddied about near distances in the low-lying Weald, made subtle mystery of the road fore and aft, and clung in shredding lumps in the bare hedges on either hand. Swanhild was at the wheel, Oliver in the tonneau with the elder visitor, leaning forward to join in the conversation. Luna, nestled back in her corner beside Swanhild, could see both faces, and beyond Oliver her relative. Madame Yorke was beautifully null and politely interested in whatever was under discussion.

"Any more Culpeper fragments turned up?" asked Luna.

"Goddard thinks he has spotted some in one of the sodden balls," replied Swanhild. "He's taken it home to steam it; he's aw-

fully good at things like that, you know."

"Capital. How are you off for visitors?"

Oliver almost groaned. "It was putrid yesterday. Some perishers of charabanc owners ran special trips from Brighton, and we were overrun with sightseers of a peculiarly noisome sort. By a dispensation of providence the weather was a caution, and so far we have not been worried today."

"Cap-i-tal. We don't require an audience; though there's no real mystery about the present move. We are simply going to look for something the Warlock may have left in Thunder's Barrow when he ransacked it."

She placidly surveyed their wide-eyed amazement. "For this matter hidden in the past we have to rely on that tricky jade Circumstantial Evidence," she proceeded. "Let us reconstruct a little local history. Your ancestor—Magnus Hammand's Son—was buried in the barrow, and with him his most cherished personal belongings were also interred, in the Danish way.

"Seven centuries later his descendant, heir of his name and possessions, Magnus the Warlock, decided to get those personal treasures as well. He made the Hand of Glory, dug into his rude forefather's tomb, and took what valuables he found. Only I hope and think he left behind the most precious article, the bronze blade with the inscription. Four hundred years later you, the descendant of Magnus Hammand's Son by way of Magnus the Warlock, are going to open the tomb again in search of the blade. That's all."

"But how do you make it out?" asked Oliver blankly.

"When Mr. Covert told us of the Golden Calf and the way it is supposed to be guarded I began to have suspicions of the Barrow and also of the Hand of Glory. Hand and tradition illustrated one another, for most traditions have a substratum of truth. Look at Washington, a hamlet you may know as it's not a dozen miles west of your home. From time immemorial it had a tradition of a long bearded ghost haunting a particular field, and awhile ago a hoard of Saxon pennies was unearthed in that field, buried a thousand years before by some long-bearded Saxon.

"The Warlock was an alchemist, by token of the books in the hidden room, and alchemists are a gentry who require much solid gold to aid in preparing a little of the phantom variety. He made the Hand of Glory, no doubt, to stupefy the diabolical guardian of the Barrow's treasure. In the sword hilt we have one specimen of the gold he found there."

"By Jove, that's plausible!" declared Oliver.

"Only I've always understood the Barrow was ancient British, and connected with the Druids and their god the Monstrous Man," demurred Swanhild.

"When in doubt early archaeology always blamed everything on the Druids," replied Luna. "The name of the place gives its secret away in these days of more advanced knowledge. It is not the only Thunder's Barrow in the world. Thunder is an obvious corruption of Thor. Your ancestor was a pagan, a worshipper of Thor, and the Monstrous Man is an image of that god. He had it hewed in gratitude when his god cast his lot in the fair ground of Sussex, or else to guard his barrow when he was buried in it. Now, when I waked your memory connected with the Warlock and the broken sword, Mr. Hammand, you described the sword as being in company with golden plaits and a fylfot. Just what the Warlock may very well have found in the grave of a Danish chieftain."

"Those pigtails!" exclaimed Oliver.

"Precisely. No doubt they made you think of a woman, but Viking chieftains wore long hair and plaited it. And the *fylfot* is the symbol of Thor."

"My hat!" said Oliver simply.

"Still, I don't see the connection with our ancestor," Swanhild objected.

"Miss Bartendale does," reproved the loyal Oliver.

"And Miss Bartendale's going to explain the clinching connection she received last night," said Luna. "A Dublin savant has read the runes on the hilt. They run: *'I am named Helm Biter, my master is Magnus Fairlocks, Son—'* The rest is too rubbed to be legible. The runes on the blade may be better preserved."

"Jove!" said Oliver, in admiration that verged on awe.

"Are you certain the inscription is so important?" asked Swanhild.

"It must be, since the memory of it has survived in Mr. Hammand's mind."

THE car had turned north now, mounted, and slid through Thunder Barrow Gap. There was more wind in the heights, and the air was cleaner, but the valley was full of mist and the rivulet invisible. Chalk has tricky ways, and by some atmospheric cantrip the Monstrous Man glowed like a pink ghost while nearer features were murky in mist like shredded black gauze. Goddard

now met them, as he walked from the village; he greeted them with a wry grin, climbed in and advised a move for the Shaw.

"For we'll jolly well need every minute we can snatch, Oliver," he said. "I've only been able to collect a very scratch gang, and it's going to start for home half an hour before sunset. Hornblower is bringing Old Moore and the German watch his son looted to time the exodus. It's no use expecting local men to hang round the Shaw after official dusk."

"I didn't think of that," said Luna. "I'm not omniscient. How many men are there?"

"Four. Hornblower, who's the village atheist and professes no belief in anything but Bob Blatchford. He's coming because he has to prove he doesn't believe in the local spook. Our new gardener, an ex-boy scout. A labourer just come home from bettering himself in London and ready to do anything. These are coming on a cash basis; Warren, the chap you met in the Shaw, is coming for recklessness.

"Luckily my four are a hefty lot, also my bought and paid for arm is one of the best, and Swanhild is a garden maniac. You can reckon six spades. Am I to understand the object of it all, Miss Bartendale?"

Luna rehearsed her explanation while Swanhild drove carefully along the valley. "There's points I don't seem to understand," he commented. "If the Warlock went for gold alone, why did he keep the hilt hidden away, instead of using it with the rest of his loot? And simply meddling with the Barrow doesn't seem to explain his dying reference to the room, and the pardon. From what I've heard of them, necromancers can't have reckoned grave-robbing much of a crime."

"These are points *I* don't understand," replied Luna. "I only know I'm going grave-robbing with an object myself. Oh, I know what you are thinking, Mr. Covert —it isn't nice to disturb the grave of Mr. Hammand's ancestor without even the chaperonage of an exhumation order."

He reddened guiltily. "It doesn't matter what anyone thinks as long as I am satisfied," Oliver interposed in the slow, masterful way he rarely indulged in. "It's my ancestor, my land, and my Bane."

They reached the end of the road here, descended, and walked through the Shaw to the Barrow. Though lower lying ground was sodden that day, the close grown Downland turf of the mound was firm to the foot. The view from the top was all very grey, Luna's curls and Swanhild's the brightest spots in sight, and after them the glowing Monstrous Man on his grey-green slope.

The Shaw was darkly menacing, the edge of the hill, where it steeped down abruptly beyond the Barrow, suggested a coastal cliff with the mist that filled the Weald below lapping, sealike, a little beneath its overhanging turf rim. Only the sea of mist bore a muffled silence, unlike the sounding silence of the real sea. The eye, ranging dazed and flinching over its immensity could not tell where it merged in the uncoloured sky; only now and then some trick of wind in the higher atmosphere allowed a glimpse of Chanctonbury's crest, away to westward, and Wolstanbury's to east. The hoot of a motor came from some road hundreds of feet down in the mist, like the syren of a far-off ship.

The Barrow was unnaturally even in colour, only a slight depression ran down one of the long sides, near the end, facing the Man, with three small firs and a stunted yew in it. Luna hitched one end of a ball of white twine to one of the firs and walked round, paying it out on the ground, until she had marked a circle about fifteen feet across, including the four trees and the middle of the mound. By that time the workers put in an appearance. Hornblower deposited his watch and almanac on a stone, and all set to work to dig within the circle. The remainder of the afternoon was spent in grubbing up the four trees.

At the men's dinner hour Swanhild and Goddard took a turn with the spades, while Luna, who could drive a car when she chose to exert herself, Madame Yorke and Oliver went to the manor for lunch and brought them a basket back. It was getting on for three when the men struck chalk.

Not natural chalk, but chips and knobs of it packed and tamped down as flat as a floor. Hornblower, working where the small trees had been, straightened himself to look around and then spaded up some soil from in front of him. "Summut tejus queer here, sir," he said to Oliver. Where the depression had been the regularity of the made chalk floor was broken by a patch of mould, and the spadeful of it the man held up was very black and fat, unlike the light-coloured virgin earth they had cleared off the chalk. Warren inspected it and said it was like the pocket of rich, much worked soil where the village stood. "And it never grew here by Natur'," he added. "Someone must ha' started a garden and then buried it."

Oliver stood on the edge of the cutting and frowned down at the hole. "A pocket of black mould put where the chalk's been broken through," he said, as though to himself. Then he put his hand to his temple, where the bruise, shorn of Clarkson's aid, was still a liver coloured splotch. "I seem to know—where have I seen it? Oh, to be sure, at a funeral! Of course—it's churchyard earth! Consecrated soil, put there to— Now what the deuce was it put there for?"

"OLIVER! Don't be beastly!" exclaimed Swanhild.

He started and blinked. "Eh? Good Lord, what was I saying? It just jumped out," he declared contritely.

All the men hesitated, save Warren. He elbowed Hornblower aside and began to spade up the black soil. There was but a little pocket of it; soon he was shovelling up chalk chips once more. The others set to work again.

"Superintending is chilly work," said Luna. "You might take us to see the Man and the rest of the place around here, Mr. Hammand."

Oliver, looking extremely dazed, accompanied the guests up the slope and the stripped chalk path, edged with brick, that was the Monstrous Man's left leg. "Whatever made me say that?" he demanded ruefully. "It seemed to slip out. Churchyard mould—my hat!"

"It's probably churchyard mould, and sudden memory of the fact woke in your mind at sight of it. I have been rousing your inherited memory so much of late that it must now be in a state of extreme activity."

"But what could churchyard earth be doing there?"

"Consecrated soil is supposed to possess some occult virtues, and there is something sinister about that Barrow. It may have been more than gold that the Warlock went after."

They did not talk very much while he conducted them over the Beacon's sights; the earthworks with the Roman mounds over them and the full dewpond and its sparse fringe of trees. Finally they returned to the bared flint platform, near fifty feet across, that was the Monstrous Man's head.

It was indescribably spacious. The Weald a far flung map; trees and roofs dizzily tiny down below the rim of the Beacon; beyond, long blue distances and shadows moving over it all from the vast grey and silver clouds that drove over the clear blue of the sky. The Downs past Dannow were black with the shadow of one, and cut the horizon as a billowy line of greenish-black, with the church and cottages crude against their bulk, like coloured paper figures glued on a backing of dusty black velvet.

Then the main body of the clouds forged onward, and the shadow on the Downs slid to the middle distance, and left the top ripple of the uplands above it in a wavering band of impossibly bright greens and unbelievable yellows and fawns, where turf and ploughland alternated, with an amazingly white scratch of road pouring down a gap and losing itself as a dim suggestion of a grey line in the shade below; like a silver ribbon hanging down in a turgid pool.

Luna, leaning back against the wind that poured over the Beacon top, looked silently with level brows and wide eyes and found the airy splendour of it beautiful to the point of pain. Oliver glanced from the distant earth and enclosing sky and down the Monstrous Man's long perspective to the Shaw. In its semi-circle of trees the Barrow was plain to be seen, the chalk of the digging dull white, Swanhild's wool jumper a brighter white, the five men little black figures. Then he looked round at Luna, and her gaze turned from the calm contemplation of spaces past space to find his eyes introspective and distended with flinching contemplation of something without any bounds of space.

"It's all happened before!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Sky and Downs, and the Barrow with little people working on it, and a golden-haired woman somewhere about! Only the people were building, not digging. And I was there, just as the sky and Downs and big clouds were."

"Another memory-wave," she replied. "The Barrow was piled by your ancestor, who sailed from Denmark twelve centuries ago, and wasted the country and married Edith the Saxon. Hereditary memory again."

"Oh, it doesn't matter what you call it. I know I was here long ago, with a golden-haired woman. And I'm here again. And you are seeing our Sussex in more favourable circumstances, as I said you ought to!"

He said the last sentence with a sheepish suddenness, as though ashamed of his vehemence. The shame was but momentary, for he looked to the Downs again and went on: "Oh, it's a country worth fighting for! A country one can be happy in—

and it's all mine, from the Barrow to the Manor woods. My people have owned it and lived on it for over a thousand years. They fought at need, and died at need, for it. Even the Warlock did his share to stop the War of the Roses and earned the right to it afresh. My father and brother died for it. I've fought for it myself, and surely I've the right to be happy in it. Yes, even with that bestial Monster shadowing life!"

He spoke with a curious defiance, so subtly mixed with joyousness that it could not be told where one quality merged into the other, and even in the daylight the red sparks flamed at the back of his eyes. For the first time Madame Yorke broke the pleasant silence she had kept since they stopped.

"We all have the right to be happy in this fine world," she said gently. "So far as our heritage from the past, our own wrongdoings, circumstance, and the woes of our fellow-mortals, will allow."

"Our fellow-mortals? You mean Kate—" he began, his voice leaping to a note of protest that was almost shrill.

"Don't harp on that, for heaven's sake!" she protested. "Hasn't Luna told you you are in no way to blame for that?"

"The sacrifice—if I hadn't fought it off—" He stopped, defiant again. "But you said it was ancestral sin, a thing of the dead past."

"There's nothing so actively alive as the dead," Luna replied, a blank sombreness in her eyes. "When I conjure up a mental picture of humankind it takes the form of a great round plain; the present world, covered with its fifteen hundred millions of solid, living folk. And behind them—mistier and dimmer the further one strives to look—are the figures of the billions of people of the past. These are impalpable, yet extend hands that reach and grasp the living people grown from them, and guide them with power almost resistless both for good or evil. Clouds of people of the past; clouds beyond clouds I see them—the dead whose very essence, the fruit of their deeds and thoughts and words, lives in us, the living." She shivered.

"Do you believe we are only reflections of our ancestors?" asked Oliver.

LUNA roused herself. "Oh, no, and you must never let yourself think that, Mr. Hammand! We human beings are threefold. One part is hereditary, the result of what our ancestors did and thought; one the result of the circumstances in which our lives are spent; and the third the spark of Himself God puts in us all—the personality. The personality through which, by God's grace and our own effort, we can either rule heredity and circumstance, or else rise superior to them. If I did not believe this, Mr. Hammand, I should not be here, desecrating the Barrow in which your ancestor is buried to find the secret that empowered your hereditary Bane to have power over his guiltless descendants."

"That's so." He agreed absently, for his attention had wandered, while she talked, to the Barrow. "Miss Bartendale, you said some time ago that old Magnus the Dane probably killed all Edith's people. I'm sure you were wrong there."

"Really? I cannot picture a Viking chief getting permission to marry a Saxon lady unless he killed her protectors first."

"Oh, I know. He loved her so—so largely that he made them take him as a friend because she did."

"I can still less picture a Dane suspending his pirate operations long enough to conduct a courtship."

"It didn't take long. They only needed a little while to understand each other. Only a few days—Monday to Monday, inclusive. I know it."

A little pink overspread the delicate pallor of Luna's cheeks.

"I'm talking like a fool," he said. "I don't know what you'll think of me, for I scarcely know what I'm thinking, myself, at times! I've been so happy the last few days, and it doesn't seem quite right. It seems too beautiful to last, and too callous with poor Kate—I'm sorry! Only I think I've just realised life's worth living, and my ancestors have been making this bit of land for me to live in and be happy in—happy as Magnus the Dane was when he came here and realized that life was worth living at last. I know he did that; it's come all over me just now, up here standing beside the god he carved in gratitude for the gift of a bit of Sussex to be happy in and his destined woman to be happy with him. Do you think I'm crazy?"

Luna hesitated, then replied in her driest manner: "You are just better from a long illness, Mr. Hammand, and in an impressionable state, and I have roused your inherited memory to sudden consciousness of what has been implanted in you by ancestors who ruled here for a thousand years. There's a poet who may rank with Homer in the days when he also is of the past, living in this same country of yours, and he has put the truth in words for ever:

'So to the land our hearts we give,
Till the sure Magic strike,
And Memory, Use, and Love make live,
Us and our fields alike.
That, deeper than our speech and thought,
Beyond our reason's sway,
Clay of the pit whence we were wrought,
Yearns to its fellow clay.'"

"And there's a very nice clay figure running from the pit whence it was wrought!" said Madame Yorke. "Your sister scampering down from her ancestor's barrow, to be plain."

They hurried down the slope. Swanhild's voice came up. "Come at once!" she called. "We've found the golden calf!"

"Golden calf?" repeated Luna, joining her. "There should be no gold in that Barrow!"

The hole was very big now. The men stood in a knot at the edge, Goddard was down at the bottom, scraping soil off a bulky object over which he stood astride. This object was long as a man, but much thicker; it lay prone and was almost shapeless, mainly black, with some gleams of yellow where he was scraping. Warren held out something that he had rubbed on his corduroys to get the caked earth off. It was the size of a hatbox lid, and as thick, earth-smeared yellow, with green spikes thrust through the edges.

"It's pinewood, covered with gold plates fixed by copper nails," said Goddard, straightening himself. "As like a calf as anything."

The hired workers stiffened with one accord, and glanced at the west, now reddening as the rest of the sky paled. Hornblower went to consult old Moore and the watch. "A heathen idol made o' pine!" said Warren.

Oliver leaped into the excavation. "It's not a calf and not an idol!" he corrected. "It's—" He stopped, and looked round, over the edge of the cutting. At the pines' tops, the bulk of the Beacon, black against the incarnadined west, and the Man pale on it. "Not a calf, and not an idol," he repeated. "Now, what is it? There's two important things one makes of wood. Idols and— What's the other? It's made of wood, painted and gilded. Something that stands upright. This is lying flat." He suddenly slapped his thigh with his usable hand. "A figurehead! The figurehead of a ship—this is a ship's figurehead!"

Almost he shouted, in a culminating burst of delight. "A ship's figurehead in Magnus the Dane's barrow—why, it's a dragon, to be sure! The dragon figurehead of a dragon ship! We're standing on the deck, with some soil between, of our ancestor's dragon ship, Swan, old girl! Don't you remember? I do. He came up the Adur on board it, and when he died they dragged it over country and buried him in it. The bulwarks, with shields on them, and there, and there—" He stabbed a finger towards the earth a couple of yards on either side of the fallen figure. "And Magnus himself is under our feet, under his own deck, with the long green blade like a leaf at his feet."

"Boat-burial, and a figurehead!" exclaimed Luna as he stopped. "Why did I not think of it?"

"'Tis less than 'alf a' hour o' sunset, Mus' Hammand!"

The voice of Hornblower made the announcement from a distance discreetly clear of the Shaw. While Oliver discoursed the three hirelings had taken but a few moments to get coated and on to the beech hanger south of the pines. Stolid Sussex was in every line of their figures the unhired workers knew better than to remonstrate. Oliver ran his fingers through his curls.

"Whatever have I been up to now?" he asked Luna.

"Another memory wave," she replied. "The question is; how are we to finish the work? If we leave it till morning the tale of gold those fellows spread will compel us to work under the eyes of half the reporters in London."

Oliver's eyes became introspective, while he stared at the ground on which he stood. "A yard of chalk, badly pressed, then the deck, then Old Magnus." He tossed his head and was himself again. "There's over an hour to dusk; three could do it in that time."

"Then you go home and we'll finish it." Swanhild took up her spade again.

"I'll stay. There's no danger till dark, even for me. Miss Bartendale has told me so."

"There's no danger even for you in the dark when I'm present," Luna confirmed. "I know how to avert it."

"Then why don't you teach us the knowledge?" asked Goddard.

"Because mere knowledge is of no use without the training that enables the possessor to utilize it with safety. As you'll understand when I tell of the ritual and its disastrous consequences."

"A little grave-desecrating goes a long way with a person of my simple tastes." Madame Yorke put in. "I'd rather go back

to the manor for a rest while you young things enjoy the finale. Also you'll need spades and trowels for the later fine digging."

This settled it, and it was arranged that Oliver and Luna should take her home and return with the tools, while the others hastened the work on. Oliver promised they would keep to the track along which the hirelings had now vanished, clear of the pines.

WHEN the car stopped under the Shaw again darkness was still a thing of the future. The Downs were dull and dim; yet marvellously distinct and solid under a sky mainly devoid of positive colour, but waning to transparent pale orange beyond Thunderbarrow Beacon. Over the Beacon, one puce-coloured cloud jagged along its underedge with red-hot copper seemed astonishingly distinct and harsh in the airy softness of the rest of the firmament. The moon; a shy, eroded crescent; sailed over the village where in cottage windows little reflections of the coppery cloud glowed luridly.

Frost had set in; it would have been a time of breathless silence, but the eternal wind of the Down heights was pouring, chill and steady, through Shaw and hanger, stirring the trees to a breathy droning like that of an angry sea. Luna and Oliver were halfway along the lower path when a cry came down wind: a shrill little squeal that made both start. "A rabbit; some brute's been setting traps again!" cried Oliver. His eyes gleamed red with the profound anger of a man who rarely gives way to passion. Luna's hands went up to her ears at the sound, and down again as it came once more, pitiful as the wail of a little lost soul crying out at worse than physical pain. "It's in the Shaw, not far!" she exclaimed. "To heel, Roska!"

Oliver caught her wrist. "There's no danger where I am," she said, then jerked free with: "Oh!" in pitying horror, as a third cry came.

"You must not go!" he called, but she darted up amongst the beeches, the dog at her heels. She was out of sight in the few moments it took him to realise she had gone and to start after her over the packed leaf-carpet between the wide-set trees. The beeches were passed before he caught sight of her again, speeding into the dark boscage of the Shaw, guided by another squeal. He called, and the wind brought his voice back to him as he darted into the black windings in turn.

There was a faint scent of smashed pine and fir needles under his feet, a little colourless sky showed translucently betwixt the close-shouldering trunks, and overhead in broken threads and rags between the masses of the boughs. In Oliver's head something seemed to turn over, heave itself, run down, catch at his heart, and send a warm wave along every nerve of his big body. He was joyfully, ecstatically conscious of every bone and muscle, working and rippling in harmony; of the wind that sang through his bristling curls; of his feet slapping crisply on the needle-carpet; and could trace every vein by the burring, singing thrill that ran along it. And back of it all was a consciousness that it was all familiar, had all happened before.

It was no new thing; pinewood, and duskiness, and himself coursing like a young god after a woman who fled before him. He had forgotten the Monster; forgotten the cause of the chase; fear and pity alike had no power over him. He could not have recalled his own name without a pause to think. He was simply a fiercely live personality in a world that held nothing but dark woods and a golden-haired woman.

It had all happened before, that moment which held the joy of all the ages in it; the joy that was the more perfect because it was graciously just imperfect, with one step of culminating splendour yet to be reached.

Something scuttled past him; in two more steps he was towering over Luna at the end of a piny tunnel. She was rising from her knees, her curls and eyes glowing in what light came in cracks from all round. The dog stood beside her like a dusky phantom. She held the trap in her hands. "I let it go; its leg was only a little hurt and life is worth living here even if one's lame," she said.

Her eyes met his, and she stood still. He made no movement and did not speak, for through the warm ecstasy that enwrapped him he knew the culmination was not yet to be.

They stood at gaze a moment and she paled, then by an effort she turned from the mastery of his scarlet-glowing eyes and flung the trap away. The spell was broken, involuntarily his eyes followed the flight of the rusty metal through alternate flashes of shade and pale light, and its fall into the nearest bushes.

"Pines and firs, cold and stars!" he exclaimed suddenly. They were in a sort of inverted funnel of foliage, round them

were the little cracks of pale, lingering daylight, but the funnel overhead was coal-black and in its patch of opening there glimmered two stars. "Come!" he cried, then: "It's coming—the Monster!"

IT WAS coming. The sudden sense of dread and repulsion, the consciousness of something intangible closing round him, of an indescribable presence and pressure, acutely evident, though imperceptible to bodily senses. He gave a shout, a shout with whose utterance he had no conscious connection, and it rang in his ears as though some one else had roared the snarling, defiant drone of it.

"Heysa-aa!" it was. He caught up Luna on his usuable arm, swirled round on his heels, and plunged back through the ride for the beeches. The dog followed without making any sound. At the same time Luna pulled from her pocket an electric torch she had brought for use in the excavation, and switched its white ray round on trees and ground and the scraps of daylight that shamed it, a turn of her wrist sending the light full in his eyes so that he was blinded for the while. "There's nothing here—now!" she said.

He knew she spoke truth, for with her words the sense of the abominable presence fled and there was nothing but wholesome dusky woods, the woman clutched on his arm, and the dog loping beside them. For all that he did not slacken his pace until he had dashed out on the turf beyond the Shaw, and halted with open country round and no stars to be seen in the still daylit sky.

"It's gone," he said, in a quiet tone that was a chant of triumph too tremendous for boasting.

"I can control it," she answered, hushedly.

"I mastered it," he contradicted. "God would not permit me to save myself from it—or other people. But to save you He gave me the power."

"No," she cried anxiously. "It was I who controlled it."

He laughed a low, triumphant laugh. "We will say we conquered it between us—together."

"You might put me down," she said, suddenly. Both had forgotten he was holding her still. While he talked to her with half his brain the other had been considering how natural it seemed to be holding her, with her face above his against the sky. She belonged to the place—so said the ecstatic half of his brain while the other gave words to his lips—it had all happened before. He holding her, and her face against a pale sky above his own. Only was she a part of the place, or the place a part of her?

The stars just becoming visible round her; pale lights in the pallid sky, as her eyes were lights in the pallor of her face; pale stars, the ghosts of stars that shone in such a sky a thousand years before: a sky under which he held a woman on his arm and was glad to the point of pain. And either the yew berries on a vanguard tree just within his arc of vision were harsh mimics of her scarlet lips, or her lips were ghosts of yew berries that glowed a thousand years before, when he held a woman and felt the pain of too much gladness. At her words the dreaming half-brain recollected itself and knew what it had been dreaming over: echoed echoes of when its owner's forebears carried off their destined women.

He set her down beside the car. He said no word of apology, and again something turned in his head and, without strain or any sense of bathos, the half-brain's visions ceased.

"Do you know what you said in the wood?" demanded Luna.

"No, I don't. Only it sounded like—oh, *heysa-aa*. That's it! It seemed to come into my mouth of itself. Was it a spell to keep the Monster away that I suddenly remembered?"

"No, but I recognised it. I know it, and if the runes are on the blade— Come."

They made for the lower track again. The man smiled to himself. They had resumed the relations of client and specialist. It was as it should be: he was not the man to give his love where it was not fated to be given, and he was not the man whose love would go to a woman who did not expect the decorous, slow niceties of wooing. She had read all that was in his eyes as he looked up at her; he knew he had been beguiled by the gloaming and the shock of the Monster's coming into prematurity—though only with his eyes. She had glossed over it prettily, they had taken up ordinary intercourse just where it had been interrupted.

He glanced up at the darkling Shaw and laughed outright at it. He had met and escaped the Monster, and he had no more dread of it. Such utter lack of dread that he did not mind his chosen woman risking another meeting with it if pity called. That was it—it could never harm her or him when they faced it together.

When he laughed Luna knew his thoughts, and for a moment there tugged at her heart a desire to tell him all—to destroy his fool's paradise, to take from her own heart the burden of seeing him in it and anticipation of the inevitable agony when he must be dragged from it.

Tell him—for her own comfort—and so destroy the web of protection her wits and learning were weaving round him and his for ever! She spoke up sharply: "It has no power with me, but remember your promise not to risk a meeting with it."

"Exactly, I dare not risk a meeting without your protection," he assented. "Miss Bartendale, I believe I'm living a double life, in the same place and same skin and at the same time! Simultaneously I'm thinking of myself and how glad I am to be alive here, and living over how glad my forebears were to be alive here. I suppose it's your doing, stirring up my ancestral memory. It must be affecting my sanity a bit—and it's very joyful madness!"

"You will be painfully sane when I tell you the full truth," she answered, curt with the struggle in her own heart. Round the end of the path Swanhild raced to them. "We've reached the deck!" she called. "It's oak, and there's black mould on it, too!"

THEY ran back to the excavation. Warren was resting a moment, seated on a slope of mingled chalk chips and virgin soil that ran from the Barrow's centre down to the uneven surface of decaying dark wood where Goddard was scraping with the edge of a spade.

"It's badly smashed about," Goddard reported. "The chalk has poured down through it there. I suppose we break through now?"

Luna shuddered. Because the end was in sight, and because it is one thing to lay plans with the impersonal aid of learning, and another to break in on the ancient dead with one's actual hands and eyes. Warren jumped up, but Oliver checked him. He knew what was in Luna's mind.

"No need to disturb the old Lord of the Manor," he said, in his roundest voice of command. He leapt down the hole and stared at the wasted oak with inturned eyes. "Let me see—his helmet's where you stand, Goddard. His plaits stretch to my own feet. The blade was at *his* feet. Ah, yes! It's under the chalk now. Dig there, and dig carefully."

So they dug as he directed, and within the half hour—before the moon was really a light—they found a rotten leather shoe with a golden clasp on it, and above it a little yellow dust that must have been bone of the living Hammands' bones. Those they buried back again in the thickness of black mould that was over them, and amid the chalk they found three sadly battered shards of coppery bronze that put together into the blade on which Luna's hopes centred.

In the dry chalk they had got little verdigris, but the chalk in its descent on them had wrought harm no mere tarnishing could have done. On the largest fragment rubbing with a leather glove was enough to clear the surface, and on it at least the damage seemed irreparable. The runes had been scratched on it, not properly graven as on the gold hilt-plates, and the sliding chalk had practically planed them away. While Goddard and Warren shovelled back part of the soil to close the digging until morning, Luna and the Hammands examined the shards under the light of the torch.

"Well?" said Swanhild at last. She shivered as she put the decisive question.

"It is totally spoilt—" Luna hesitated.

"You can do no more?" suggested Oliver.

"It is checkmate, and I must try another line of enquiry!" she snapped. "A line I don't like to pursue. I don't understand it!" she broke out, with more emotion than she had displayed so far. "I am so evidently right to a certain point. Someone has dug before us, and it must have been the Warlock. So I said, but why he left the gold on the dragon, and why he put the black soil there I do not know. It is utterly bewildering, yet every detail must have some bearing on the problem."

She turned impatiently, and led the way round to the car.

The twilight was changing to misty blue dusk; earth was gaunt, the Shaw darkling and evil; the Monstrous Man seemed to exult with a vast, callous, ghastly joy, to Swanhild. She tucked the rugs round Luna while the men made some final arrangements for filling in the excavation early next morning, and took the chance to whisper: "Miss Bartendale, what is the other line of enquiry?"

"My *dernier ressort*. I shall compel the Monster to manifest itself in the hidden room to-night, and reveal its origin."

"You can compel it to appear?" Swanhild glanced at the Shaw, as though fearful that the declaration might bring the Monster forth.

"I can—in the hidden room. You shall be convinced, for you shall see it."

"I see it—I see the Monster?"

"Yes, you must be there. It will not harm you, for I can control it nor will you die of the sight, nor kill yourself after; since I compel it to come; but life will never be the same to you afterwards. Yet for your brother's sake you must see it. Are you afraid?"

"I am, but I'll come. Surely, after the war—"

"Nothing the war brought could prepare one for this. Now, do not say anything to the men; it is between us—a matter women are better fit to bear than men."

Swanhild nodded. Somehow, it was not such a shock that she was to see the Monster, but that a time place was fixed. "The hidden room—to-night!" she repeated.

Luna gave her a little, silencing frown. Goddard had come up behind her.

GODDARD declined a dinner invitation, and went straight home. The Mound of the Golden Pigtails had proved a ghastly frost; so he expressed it to himself. He had seen that even Luna was somewhat discouraged, and had caught the horrified tone, though not many of the words, in which Swanhild addressed her before he came up.

Luna was at a loss, Swanhild patently aghast about it, and he fancied that in his desk might be waiting something of use in the crisis. The others had been too absorbed in the Barrow to ask how his work was getting on, and for fear of exciting undue hope in Swanhild's mind he had not mentioned that he had deciphered the word "Warlock" on three fragments overnight. Accordingly, he went back to his scraps and lumps of *papier mâché* with a brain freshened by the day's work out of doors, and woke out of an absorption of toil some hours later, with swimming head, aching eyes, and a hope that he had found out what might be of more use than all Luna's wandering data.

There could be no mistake: here was an account, fragmentary but clear, of Magnus the Warlock's motives, methods, and misadventures in opening the Mound of the Golden Pigtails. The account of an eyewitness, repeated at one remove, a hundred and thirty years after the actual happening.

The hours was not so very late, even for primitive Dannow, so, leaving word that he had gone to the Manor, he went out, anxious to hearten Swanhild with the least delay. It was very cold and very clear, winter stars flickering overhead and the best part of a gale helping him along.

He took a short cut through an ineffective patch of the park railings and skirted the moat by the west side of the house. Dannow, like all properly regulated Sussex houses, faces north; it towered over him blackly, the world beyond it indistinct, trees and sky blending together all round, only the eternal Monstrous Man straddling along his hillside, creepily distinct, up in the heavens. At point of turning the corner for the bridge he stopped and stood dumbfounded.

There was a light where no light should be. A dull glow from the grille of the hidden room.

It might be nothing. So he told himself after the first involuntary jump of his startled brain. Only the tone of Swanhild's voice speaking with Luna after the Barrow fiasco obtruded itself suddenly on his recollection, and the words he had scarcely noted at the time came clear and sharp. "The hidden room—to-night!" Tone and words repeated themselves over and over in his brain as he stepped to the brim of the moat and hooked an arm round a fir's trunk to save himself from being blown over into the lapping black water.

The grille's lower edge was above the level of his eyes, fifteen feet away over the moat; he could only see the twisted ironwork of it, in broken black lines against the glow on the wall behind. Such a curious glow, bluish-white, a secretive sort of light, even when allowance was made for the sloping tunnel and two iron nets. Besides, if anyone was there with a light why were not the shutters closed? The wind was pouring straight into the room; it would be inconvenient to say the least. His instinctive lover's fear caught fire from the words singing themselves in that terrified tone of the beloved's voice through his head—"The hidden room—to-night!" What business could anyone have within the hidden room at night? On a Monster night, too, cold and windswept!

Afterwards, he could not recollect if he told himself spying was justified in the circumstances, or if he simply did not think of ethics at all, any more than he remembered the arrangement of the grilles. If it was anything unholy he was the person to investigate; for he was not of the fated Hammands. He simply ran to the bridge, hung his overcoat on the parapet, and climbed over into the ivy.

It was easy going, the old branches, thick as a liner's hawser, crawled in and out of the leaves, humping themselves against and away from the wall; like pythons cased in cocoa-matting and spikes. Very good foothold; Goddard simply ran sideways along the wall, like a spider, in spite of the wind that got between him and the stonework; rounded the corner; scrambled to the grille; and came to anchor with his feet on the sill, the fingers of his real hand knitted in the ironwork, his artificial arm hooked round an ivy branch.

THE tunnel was full of the glow, and the roar and sizzling of the wind down it. He could only see the inner grille, all black lines against light. As to hearing—he was beginning to realize what a consummate ass his fears had made of him when a voice came up the tunnel.

Luna's voice. He had noted before its curious carrying power; now it came quite distinctly against the wind, cutting, thin and low and vibrant, right through the clamour. At the same moment the light went out.

"Pines around and above you; stars, clear and cold, above the pines. Wind, clear and cold, around all and soughing through all," the voice came, in a sort of hushed, monotonous chant, uncanny in the circumstances. "Starlight, cold wind, and fragrant pines, round you a pentacle erected beyond whose line you may not pass, and a victim for you without the pentacle's line. You are alone with one human victim; I empower you to manifest yourself visibly, Hamandr the Undying! In pines and wind and starlight—I empower you to manifest yourself—Skinturner! In the names of the Asa Gods—of Odin Allfather, and Vingi Thor, and Asa Lok, Hamandr! In pines, and wind, in starlight—*and the pentacle*—I command and empower you to appear! Skinturner—Skinturner—in names of the Asa Gods, Hamandr Skinturner, turn your skin and come!"

She ceased. The wind held full sway in Goddard's ears for one hushed moment of expectation. Then, cutting through the blast by main force, came an infernal sound that lifted the hair on his forehead with horror.

A demoniac cacophony. Shrill and droning at once; deep yet crackling; bestial yet touching the human, human enough to make the bestiality of it obscene; triumphant and despairing, glad and bitter; all hate, all the abysmal passions of a lost soul kept from annihilation by its own quenchless wickedness, put in a single cry. So it swelled out into the dark, and Goddard knew he had heard the Undying Monster.

He had heard it alone; it was the sight of it that made men kill themselves rather than live with the memory in their brains. Three times it snarled out, then stopped as a third voice rose; deep but sharp.

"Oh, Luna!" Swanhild cried, almost whimpering.

Again came the inexpressive drone of the Monster.

"Oh, Luna! Luna! I can't bear any more!" Swanhild repeated, frantic horror and dread in her tone.

The light flashed on again, then simultaneously light and all sound were cut off together.

Goddard was hanging to the ivy, windy darkness in front of him as the blast that rushed round him and down the tunnel beat back again. The shutters had been closed, and behind them Luna Bartendale must be meddling as the Warlock had meddled to his cost in the same room. With Swanhild there, already terrified to the point of panic. Swanhild who had neither cried nor broken down through all the shocks of the war years!

Her danger turned him suddenly cool and alert. The grille was firm as the wall itself, yet he must get into the room quickly, if only to share whatever catastrophe Luna's folly had involved Swanhild in. To go round to the front, explain to whoever answered the door—impossibly long. Hopeless, too; for Swanhild always locked the corridor door automatically. But she did not usually lock the room's actual entrance. He summed everything up in the moment it took him to take a fresh purchase on the ivy and set scrambling off to the right.

A GLANCE down at the ripples crawling out from the house beneath him told when he was over the spring-cellar. He had not played with Oliver and Reggie Hammand in bygone years without learning all the ins and outs of Dannow, and that the outlet to the moat was a plain arch under the water-level. An arch large enough for a slim boy to scramble through. Now he went hand over hand down by the ivy trails until his feet were in the water, his knees, his armpits. The lowest hold was reached: he took a deep breath and let himself slip down.

The wet blackness slid up over his head, he was caught in a slow wave from in

front, turned on his back, and swept in a bunch against something immovable. His head bobbed into free air; he trod water, gasping, pinned firmly against the outer marge of the moat; marked carefully where the bubbles and ripples indicated the submerged arch, filled his lungs again; kicked off from the bank, and fought through the current to its centre.

It was a crazy effort. Three boys in daylight had just succeeded in "boosting" one of their number through against the compressed tide, but it was the short cut and only way to where Swanhild was, and strength came to him from the thought. Twice he was swirled back, but at the third effort a superhuman dive brought his fingers in reach of an inequality between stones. His head felt as though it would be pressed into his shoulders by the passionless smooth force of the flowing water, his lungs seemed ready to burst, but somehow he forged through the little tunnel until quite suddenly the pressure slackened and he shot up and could breathe again.

For a little while he had to remain, just making efforts enough to counteract the suction to the arch, pressed by the upper slack of the water against the wall of the cellar. When his eyes ceased to be filled with scarlet waves and black flashes everything was silent but for the bubble of the spring, and black but for a little indefinite patch of light high above him and far in front. From his position he knew the hidden room door was open, and this was the light from within on the cellar ceiling above the ledge.

The silence hit him like a physical blow as soon as breath and memory were back. The Monster's howl would have been preferable. Was all over? He asked it of himself as he felt his way with the strength of desperation, round to a corner in the darkness and then along the side wall to the ledge. Once a hand grasped that all was settled, he swung on to it and reached the niche in a couple of bounds.

There he hung on a foot while his heart missed a beat. The deathly stillness hit him afresh, but his hesitation scarcely delayed him one step's time. He leapt to the threshold and stared with the boldness of utter dread down into the room.

CHAPTER VII

THE CLUE OF CLUES

SWANHILD was the only person in the room, and in the first dazed glance Goddard thought she was dead. With the odd double consciousness that comes in times of shock or emotion he was mildly surprised with half his mind that he could take in everything so calmly.

The Warlock's table had been pulled into the corner before the stair foot, the lamp on it showing all the room distinctly, and in particular Swanhild's huddled figure; kneeling with arms sprawled on the table and her face hidden on them. The crocks and inscribed stone were pushed against the walls, and in the cleared space of most of the floor was chalked a large figure; the five-pointed star known as the pentacle. In the middle of it lay an overturned chair, and without its lines the Hand of Glory, the gold and bronze sword, and the plates from the dragon figurehead.

He noted every detail in the fraction of a second it took his advanced foot to descend on the top stair. The stair shook at the touch, Swanhild lifted her head and sprang to her feet. He came down.

"Goddard!" Swanhild exclaimed. "You have come—of course you would come when—" It had been a cry of relief; her tone changed as she stopped in the middle of her sentence. "Oh, why did you not come earlier?" she gasped.

Goddard reached over the table and caught hold of a wrist. "Come away at once!" he repeated. "I heard the Monster and Miss Bartendale!"

"There was no danger. No danger with Luna there. It has gone, Goddard. Why, you are drenched! How did you come here?"

"Through the moat. After I'd heard the Monster—and you crying out. Swanhild, what is it all?"

"I've seen the Monster." Her calm was awful in its way. Control, learnt and inherent, had pulled her together. "There was no danger. No physical danger," she amended.

"Not as long as it stayed in the pentacle, eh?"

BUY VICTORY BONDS
AND SAVE MONEY!

Goddard was more himself. He felt nothing sentient but their two selves was there now. The secret hiding-place gaped empty, the stone drawer was on the table, and the hand's musty, musky wrappings. Old reading reminded him the pentacle is a holy symbol; if you stand in one evil spirits cannot cross its chalked lines to you; if you drive an evil spirit into one it cannot get over the lines.

"What do you know?" Swanhild rapped out anxiously.

"What I heard through the grill before the shutter closed and made me come to you any way."

"Oh, Goddard!" Her eyes kindled, then clouded. "Ten minutes sooner—what did you hear altogether?"

"I heard Miss Bartendale summon it, it howled, you cried out and the shutter closed. Swanhild, you have learnt something."

"I must not tell you. I've met the Monster—seen it!" Her control broke and she hid her face again in her hands as she almost wailed: "I have met it, and lived—as the Anchorite and Crusader did! Only there's no war now to get killed in, and no real Church for final refuge—oh, why did God let us keep Oliver alive for this? If only he had died cleanly in the war—"

"Hush, dear," Goddard said patiently. "You've had some sort of shock, and don't know what you are saying—"

"I know too well. I know why the Warlock and Grandfather killed themselves when they—"

"Swanhild! You are not thinking of—" He could not put it into words, but slipped round the table and clasped an arm round her, with some vague idea of stopping her from violence to herself.

"No, no Goddard!" she cried hastily, dropping her arms and letting him see the blank horror in her eyes. "It's different with me. Luna prepared me and raised it to convince me. I would not—could not—believe it without evidence. It could not have harmed anyone while she had it under control. Only I know all, and there's nothing left for me in life now—"

"Except to help whoever must learn the truth also."

It was Luna's voice. Actually Goddard had never thought of her absence from the room, in his consternation and concern for his own woman. She came down the stairs now, queerly suggestive of the priestess of some ancient cult in the thick grey coat that hung in severe folds round her.

"To think I brought you here!" Courtesy and ordinary decency went by the board as that crowning fact occurred to Goddard.

Luna smiled coolly.

"Some day you will understand the inestimable good you did when you brought me in a hurry, Mr. Covert."

"You have exposed Swanhild to some unspeakable danger—"

"I have broken to her—with what gentleness the subject permitted—something she was bound to learn."

"Then let me know it, too."

"I have a perfectly valid reason for not doing so at present. Why, man, do you think I'm enjoying all this?"

THE level voice broke to a note of bitter, appealing irony. Swanhild slipped away from Goddard's arm and passed one of her own round the smaller woman's shoulders. "You must not worry Luna, Goddard!" she protested. "She is suffering worse than I am."

"Hush! You must not say that, Swanhild!" Luna disengaged herself from Swanhild's arm, crossed to the pentacle, and, with her back to the others, bent to pick up the Hand of Glory. She turned again and addressed Goddard in her usual placid tone. "How do you happen to be here—and wet, Mr. Covert?"

"He only heard me shout, and came through the moat," Swanhild explained hurriedly. "He heard—heard the Monster, that's all. If he had only been ten minutes earlier, Luna!"

"It is certainly a great pity, if you had to come at all, that you did not come ten minutes earlier, Mr. Covert," said Luna. While she was speaking she had wrapped the Hand in its mouldy coverings and replaced it in the stone box. Goddard suddenly woke to the oddity of it. "Miss Bartendale," he said; "on a previous occasion the mere proximity of that hand gave you acute physical distress. You have handled it casually now. It's a bit odd."

She flushed from neck to temples. "Perhaps it's another of my mysteries," she replied, defiantly. "Perhaps I simulated that distress for my own purposes. At least, that's what you think, it is evident."

Swanhild turned indignantly. "If you suspect Luna of anything mean I shall hate you, Goddard!" she exclaimed.

Then Luna spoke again, mistress of herself and the situation once more.

"Mr. Covert, later you shall learn the meaning of our operations here, and at the same time you will understand why we

cannot explain them now. What do you say about that, Swanhild?"

"I say you are right, Luna. I said it before. Nobody but we two must know anything until you succeed or fail utterly. Goddard, dear; will you take our assurance, on our honour, that we have run into no danger, and will run into none, however suspicious circumstances may appear?"

Goddard hesitated. "I must consult Oliver," he began.

"On no account!" exclaimed Luna, emphatically. "He knows nothing of this, and is to know nothing until we choose to tell!" Swanhild chimed in almost fiercely:

"If you mention this to Oliver you will regret it all your life, Goddard! In a few days at most we shall tell him ourselves; and tell you; and then you will understand it all."

"Everything you say makes it more mysterious," he protested.

"It does. Yet the explanation can be given in a sentence, perhaps in a single word." Luna was not herself, behind her outer calm, and as she spoke her eyes strayed involuntarily to the broken inscription. Goddard noted it.

"In an Old English word?" he asked sharply.

Luna's eyes turned to his again. They did not flinch, but she half-smiled; the smile of a clever person caught napping. "Perhaps, perhaps not," she answered.

"Then possibly I may find out that word for myself."

Swanhild broke in.

"Goddard, we were forgetting; you are wet through—"

"Then you shall see us safely out of the room," said Luna, obviously relieved.

In the corridor, with both doors locked behind them, Swanhild halted. "You'll come to Oliver, he's in the Holbein room with Madame Yorke, and get a change?" she said.

"I don't feel like meeting anyone at present. I can let myself out by the side door and run home. I won't take any harm."

"Just one question," said Swanhild; "what brought you here at this time?"

"I was taking a short cut on business," he answered shortly; "and heard it howl. Dear, you do look rotten!"

"She'll break down as soon as you go, Mr. Covert," put in Luna, "and the longer you stay the worse the break will be. Go, for Heaven's sake!"

It was evident Luna also was near

"Only Ash Yggdrasil stands firm. Earth is but an icy-cold wilderness. . . ."

breaking point. Without further words Goddard went.

He went on his way round the court and through the unlocked bridge gate. The open air felt unreal and his head spun with nothing definite in it save that Swanhild had safely passed some danger and the clue to all lay in the missing word of the stone.

IN A time of stress and surprise people act without realizing the subconscious reasoning that dictates their procedure. Only when he was back home, dry, and settled in the lamplit familiarity of his own library did astonishment and incredulity come to Goddard. A sense of unreality tried to possess him, only held at bay by memory of the demoniac howling and the look in Swanhild's eyes.

It was so utterly confusing. What mortal creature could have made the noise he had heard? All the old stories thronged his mind; the everliving Hammand; the half-beast born at intervals and hidden away; dead Hammands coming back in vampire shape. They were lies, gangrenescent lies, of course; yet Miss Bartendale herself had spoken of unexpected truth woven in with the embroidery of tradition.

A ghost? He had a healthy derision for materialistic spiritualism, but Miss Bartendale had referred to Fifth Dimensional beings—beings beyond the alleged Fourth Dimension of ghostdom.

Only, he recollected it then, she had said Fifth Dimensional beings had to assume a material form in which to manifest themselves to the physical senses. Both she and the Monster had disappeared from the hidden room in the few minutes it had taken him to get in by the moat. The word "Ectoplasm" flashed into his mind. Mediums could let spirits take this substance from their own bodies in which to manifest themselves. He had seen about it in some magazine that very month. Had Miss Bartendale done something of the sort? Now he thought of it; she had never spoken in her own voice while the howls went on. As to her evanishment from the room: oh, mediums had all sorts of arrangements.

What, though, of Swanhild's exclamation: "If only you had been here ten minutes before!"—and Miss Bartendale's confirmation of it?

And Miss Bartendale had not been able to gloss over her involuntary glance towards the broken stone as she said a single word would explain all.

Obviously the lost word at the beginning of the third line. "??????: Hammand:" it was. He would read down, C, G, O, Q, and S in a dictionary, in search of six letter words ending in L or Z.

He thought there would be no sleep for him that night when he got out the largest dictionary in the house and started work on it. He was young and healthy, however, his mind was at rest over Swanhild's safety for the time, and reading solidly down a dictionary in the small hours is somnolent labour. Gradually his head drooped on the page, and only when one of his dogs came scratching at the library door did he wake to the late winter dawn.

His first act was to ring up Dannow, and his heart acted oddly until Oliver's placid voice brought relief. All was all right at the manor, only poor old Swan looked like a nerve-ridden imitation of herself; after a night of neuralgia. They were all four going to have a paper-chase in the lumber rooms. Would Goddard come and help? And—they'd forgotten to ask him overnight—what about the papers he had already?

Goddard couldn't come over; thanks. As to the papers, he wouldn't raise hopes, but he wished to devote the morning to them. He would let them know when he was sure of anything.

In the afternoon, he tramped past the lodge and overtook Swanhild in the avenue. It had rained all day, more or less, this was one of the dryest interludes: a thinning in the showers, full of the kind of lazy sprinkle with sunshine glinting through that makes a blank wall beautiful, and a spacious fairydom of huddled trees; particularly when a man's beloved is there in the dropping lines of light, austerely shapely in glistening oilskins.

Swanhild started as he ranged up beside her. "Hullo, Goddard!" she said uneasily.

EVEN in the four syllables the change in her voice was striking. Something had gone out of it, it was forced, old, tired behind its affection of heartiness. He replied: "Cheerio, Swan; this is topping! I'm sure we'll both feel nicer for a little talk before we face society together."

"I—you guessed—" Swanhild looked sideways at him as they walked on. "I meant to avoid you. For a bit."

"Bless you, of course you did! You've had a shock and have promised not to confide in me. In a reversal of the circumstances, I'd have funked your society myself. Only it wouldn't be sense."

"You always understand, Goddard!" She suddenly crooked her arm in his and squeezed it, looking in his eyes with an admiring trust such as he fancied Dian might have bestowed on Endymion. She made a very haggard Dian, though. She had aged ten years since their parting near the Barrow. She was composed as usual, but blue rings were under her eyes, and behind the calm of them they put him in mind of Dante's Frozen Circle.

"Dear," he said; "I understand you because I love you and I have a feeling that Miss Bartendale's secrecy is unsafe—"

She interrupted eagerly. "Nothing can happen, so long as we have Oliver's promise to avoid the Shaw and room. He alone is in any danger."

"But, you know, this promise can't go on for ever."

"It is only for a few days, Goddard. And for that time Oliver must not know anything—"

"Hm'm: Hence that neuralgia stunt."

"Of course. Goddard, you promised not to tell him—"

"My dear, I did. You needn't think I'd peach, though I'd sooner have anyone, good old Oliver included, in the big bonfire than you worried for a minute."

She looked at him uneasily. "Goddard, dear, there's something I want to say about our engagement. If the truth has to be made public; as it must be if anyone is in danger of being charged with what happened in the Shaw—"

She ended falteringly, inexpressive horror in her eyes again.

"You mean some men would be glad to creep out of the engagement?" He stared at her blankly. "Swanhild, will it be so bad as all that—telling the truth?"

"It will become a matter of history," she replied, her eyes seeming to cling to his despairingly. "The newspapers—you know. And it will be put in books, loathsome books about notorious scandals; all in a section by itself. And it will be raked up in articles and magazines for ever—"

"My dear," he interrupted; "that's quite enough. If public exposure becomes necessary I shall be compelled to procure a special license at once. I don't approve of a hurried marriage for you, but even your dignity must go by the board when it's a question of my getting the official right within two days to be involved in whatever public odium you and Oliver have to stand. And I'm badly mistaken if Luna Bartendale will desert Oliver—"

"Goddard, you mustn't!" Swanhild cried it as though she had been struck. "You mustn't talk of them like that."

Goddard stared. "Oliver and Miss Bartendale? Why, haven't we been bucking ourselves for a week because the old boy's absorption in her has kept him from brooding?"

"The hidden room changed a lot last night. Changed everything in the world—"

"Except you and me, dear," he said.

They had wandered out of the avenue, under the shade of some beeches. Swanhild sat down abruptly on a fallen trunk and hid her face in her hands. Goddard put down the roll of papers he carried and sat beside her. After a while she was sitting up again, braced by the little breakdown with him to see her through it. "If only I could tell you!" she said.

"Just so. Now you are all right again, and we will converse on everyday topics. Such as why the deuce I'm here."

"Why? I forgot—the Culpeper manuscript?" She started eagerly. He shook his head.

"No use raising false hopes. It's another frost. It sheds no light on the Monster's nature, though it contains an account of the Warlock's opening of the Barrow, and how he let it loose after it had been laid there by the Anchorite."

Swanhild jumped to her feet. "So Luna was right as far as she got! You may not see anything in it, but she may."

"Right-o, dearest. She's an expert in such things, and can probably detect hidden meanings in my compilation. Just as a naturalist can reconstruct the entire beast from one chip of tooth. We'll barge along and consult her; but it's my belief we have been let down and landed in the cart by the Golden Pigtails."

OLIVER and the guests were in the Holbein room. Goddard, entering, found himself trying to look narrowly at Luna and the Warlock's portrait simultaneously. Luna was quite herself, bland and insouciant, as he had expected. He knew she had no need to be upset as Swanhild was: Fifth Dimensional horrors were all in her work. Only he noticed a deep line right across her forehead, and was not sure if it had been there when he first met her, or even the day before.

"No success in the lumber rooms," announced Oliver. "Swan told you, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, and I had to make a similar report about my efforts. A long narrative with nothing in it."

Luna shrugged her shoulders as though not surprised.

"Still, we want to hear it, if you please," she said.

"Of course I meant I couldn't see anything in it," he returned, catching and keeping her eyes as he spoke. "You may detect hidden meanings. It happens to be an eye-witness's relation of the opening of the Barrow by the individual over there."

"Oh!" said Madame Yorke and Oliver. Luna's eyes opened. "We must hear it," she repeated. "Is that the manuscript?"

"I've sorted and fixed all the original scraps on transparent paper, but it is very gappy, so I made a shorthand *précis* of it to read at once, thinking you could examine the other at your leisure."

Oliver, highly excited, started to pull chairs into position round the hearth.

"The document is in deplorable state," Goddard explained, when they were settled. "There's so many holes and missing words that to make the main story intelligible my copy is a modernized paraphrase, with all the old flowery turns of speech omitted. First, Culpeper repeats the details of the case he came to investigate.

"It seems that the Lord of Dannow, Sir Gilbert Hammand, and his youngest son were returning home one night from Lower Dannow. One of the horses turned up at Dannow, riderless and with its throat horribly torn, and a search party found young Hammand, a boy of thirteen, dead and partly eaten, in the Shaw. The bodies of Sir Gilbert and his horse were lying in the road, at the spot where the Beacon almost overhangs it.

"It was evident they had either fallen over while struggling with the Monster; for the horse's flanks were somewhat torn, or else jumped it in a panic. Culpeper, therefore, came to make enquiries, for his friend, Reginald, Sir Gilbert's elder son, who was in hiding as a Royalist at the time. To begin:

Fragments (modernized) of a letter from Nicholas Culpeper, Esq., written from next door to Ye Sign of Ye Red Lion, Spitafields, London, to Reginald Hammand, Esq., address lost, December, 1651.

. . . The tale that the Hammands be of a breed vampyrish, and if one be slain prematurely he shall hie him neither to Heaven nor Hell, but live unnatural in the grave his allotted span of life, so long as he may drink at certain times the blood of some creature that is quick. Which tale the vulgar do repeat, coupling it with the name of your brother Oliver, slain in Worcester fight and brought home for his burying this two months past. . .

So I went down to Sowsex, and made my inquest: the time being the waxing of the moon, a period propitious for launching any work. And first I was intent to ascertain exact dates and hours of this Monster's coming, that, the same being applied to the rules of our Divine Science of Astrology, and the rules of the Science Divine applied to them, the two interacting might formulate some warning whereby you, my good Reginald, and future lords of Dannow may be set at guard ad aeternum *against whatever heavenly configurations do enable the comings of this ghost, apparition, wraith, succubus, daemon, or whatever it be—*

Goddard broke off, somewhat breathless after the sentence. "There's an enormous gap here," he said. "And I don't quite understand this preamble, anyway."

"I do," replied Luna. "Our astrologer was ahead of his time. He tried to find the origin of the Monster by means of astrology, as I am using archaelogy and hypnotism. The same principle, utilizing different branches of science. Go on, please."

"IT'S from here I've translated into more modern wording," said Goddard, and resumed his reading:

From family papers I gat me the time of your greatfather's meeting the Monster: the which was the tenth of November, Ao. Di. 1556, and from your great-great-grandfather's tomb the date of his affliction through it in the secret room, which was Feb. 8th, 1526: but of the hours no record is left. Then made I great inquiry, ranging from the maids of your lady mother's kitchen to your good neighbours of Wiston and Danny and Newtimber, and so finally learnt that in Steyning lives one Jos. Blount, who boasts that in his youth he was intimate with John Slinfold, that was skyrer *in his nonage to Sir Magnus Hammand the Warlock. . . .*

"What's a *skyrer?*" Oliver interrupted.

"Nothing so awful as it sounds; only a sort of medium—preferably a boy who'd never been in love who looked into the necromancer's magic mirror for him," answered Luna.

. . . What he had heard from Jno. Slinfold Jos. Blount would not reveal to any being a chirurgeon by occupation, and used to keeping a shut mouth. To Steyning went I, therefore, and was directed to a

decent dwelling where a grave citizen receives me courteously, being Master William Blount, chirurgeon also, and a man of somewhat more than my own age. "Ah, 'tis great-grandfather you would see, Mr. Culpeper," he says.

To whom I: "Your grandfather, surely, Master Blount!"

To whom he: "Nay, sir, grandfather died peacefully of natural decay at the age of seven-and-eighty last Martinmas."

And so conducts me to a room where, in the sunshine, sitteth one grey and all shrunken, but younger in the eyes than his great-grandson of forty. The great grandson, then, makes my name and errand known, and leaves us. Then we speak together after this fashion:

The ancient man: "Yes, Mr. Culpeper, I was 'prentice to John Slinfold until he died in my nonage, ninety years ago. For an hundred and nine shall I be next Candlemas, Mr. Culpeper, and my son died of old age last year."

I: "Then in sooth, Mr. Blount, I fear I trouble you fruitlessly; the matter being of such a time past."

He: "Indeed you do not, Mr. Culpeper. Life's like a good stage play (if one may name such in these days) whereof one retains good memory of Prologue and End, though scenes between be forgot. Truly I remember the savour of the lollipops and marchpane I had in childhood, five reigns ago, though I forget on what I supped last night. And I can tell you what Master Slinfold told me in the year 1559, though I forget at while there's no King in London now. Master Slinfold once found me reading of a book that was Odomare his De Practice Magistri and with choler bid me stop reading of such. 'For, from the Philosopher's Stone,' says he, ''tis but one step, and that inevitable, to Black Necromancy. Whereby I am minded to tell thee, Joe, the woful ensample of my quondam master Sir Magnus Hammand. The whom began as gallant and virtuous a gentleman as ever England bred; yea as ever Sowsex bred; and is now a name to fright babes withal.'"

"And I said: 'Sir, I will listen and strive to profit.'

"Sir Magnus (said Master Slinfold) was one that had no ardour for wine beyond the third cup; who scarce noted any woman's looks save his beloved lady's; and thought not twice of gold nor rank. Also he was one of the gigantic squires that kept the Red Rose standard at Bosworth, and his dinted helm and seven foot sword are in Dannow Church to this day: at the which I would folk would stare as often as they do at his shameful boughten pardon. King Harry of Richmond would fain have had him to Court and to great honour, but he chose to bide at home and give himself to study.

"The which I tell you, my son (said Master Slinfold) to prove my contention—shewn in the past and afresh in the present—that the best of mankind, for whom the flesh and gold hold no temptation, will fall deep as greed could drag them through the presumptuous sin of prying into what God hath hidden from men. Concerning Sir Magnus I can tell you one shameful thing he did that led to his end, I serving as his skyrer many years, being an orphan whom he took into his house and kindly nurtured.

"During my first years with him his occupations were harmless enow, search after the stone that transmutes all metals to gold for King Harry his master, and for himself seeking the Elixir of Life. Which he did innocently, through drugs and distillations, capons fed on vipes and vinegar, and the like. But after I had left him, said rumour, he sought it with obscene ceremonies and black rites, even such as brought the Maréchal De Retz to the stake in France. Of which I can give no evidence, for obscenity is ever added to obscenity as any evil tale passes from vulgar tongue to vulgar tongue. Only I know what he did innocently through drugs and distil-Grave; the which he would never have done when I first worked for him.

"Always a tale had been that the Mound of Thunderbarrow hid a great treasure, some holding it was Aaron his Calf of Gold; others it was the sacramental vessels of the Druids, the which they hid when Saint Wilfrid brought Our Redeemer to Sowsex. When Sir Magnus spoke with me of opening it I put him in mind that a many had searched but ever the treasure was shifted from their search by the Devil that sits a-gaurding it. Whereat he laughs and says: 'You may keep all the gold we find, Jack, for your fee. I am after no metal, boy, but seek the Sign and Spell that empower whoso knoweth them to control all spirits, so that they go when he saith Go, and come when he saith Come!'

"Then said he further, with his eyes all a-glowing flame: 'I'll get me them, Jack, and when I've gotten them I'll use them more wisely than did Doctor Faustus—poor fool! Through the spirits I command I'll get me the Philosopher's Stone for

making of gold from earth, and I'll get me the Water of Life, and through it I'll live for ever, and whomsoever I choose shall live together with me for ever! Yea, and never an army shall stand against the ghostly legions of devils and sprites I shall command by my Spell. And never Emperour or King but will barter his kingdom or empiry for a little life more and a little more life; and time will be Magnus Hammand shall be Emperour of Earth, and whom he will shall be his viceroys! Who knoweth? in a few centuries hence—in 1800 or 1900—the ambassadors of subject nations may be abiding humbly in the meaner rooms of Dannow, to do their devoirs to Magnus Hammand, Goldmaker, Spirit Controller, Owner of the Water of Life, and therefore Emperour of Earth? Emperour of Life and Time, and therefore of Earth! Yea, verily, so shall it be; and who knoweth but they may sue for favours through Jack Slinfold, the ever-living Chief Minister of Magnus Hammand, the ever-living Emperour of Earth and Life and Time?'

GODDARD stopped and all looked up involuntarily at the Warlock's little, dark portrait. "To live for ever—Emperor of Earth!" said Oliver, a red flicker of admiration in his eyes. "To control the world and the world of spirits! He was moved by a tremendous ambition, nothing mean, when he went to search out the Barrow, that ancestor of ours, eh, Swan?"

"And he ended by bribing Posterity to pray for his soul," said Luna drily. "Pray go on, Mr. Covert."

"'But, sir,' said I, with all meekness; 'how know you this wondrous Spell lieth in Thunder's Barrow?'

"And he, answering: 'Because there's a family tradition the Anchorite, my forebear, laid the Monster in the said Barrow, having earned the power to do so by his life of mortification. Yea, and 'tis true the Monster hath never vext the family since his day. Now I ask thee, Jack, my pupil, how could a spirit of such age and power be laid save by the Spell of Spells, which is Solomon's? By Solomon's Seal and Spell, wherewith he controlled all spirits, good and evil alike. It is for written words and mystic signs we search Thunder's Barrow.'

"Then I: 'But, sir, if we remove these signs will not the Monster be freed?'

"And he: 'Nay, Jack, we shall not touch the Signs, but make a fair draught to study at ease in our workroom.'

"Then I; bringing out my final objection: 'Sir, many have dug in the Barrow, but never an one hath gotten aught save waste of labour for his fee; the Devil ever moving whatever is in it out of reach.'

"And he, laughing: 'We shall go prepared as never diggers were prepared before. To wit with a Hand of Glory.'

"And I, shivering: 'Master, this is Black Necromancy.'

"And he, concluding the matter: 'Jack, the Master am I, and on my head be the guilt!'

"For the hand Sir Magnus went after dark to the gallows above the Monstrous Man, where hung Will Stredwick, gibbeted three days before for killing of—"

(Here is a break in the document, the next part begins in the middle of a sentence).

. . and at the tips of the fingers and thumb we placed candles of fat, procured from Will also. Then all was ready, and on the first of the darks of February we went, with Hand, and spade and pick, to Thunderbarrow Shaw. These I carried, my Master, as the stronger, bearing a lanthorn and on his back a great bag of consecrated earth from the churchyard. Moreover, we had St. John's Wort—that keepeth evil spirits at bay—hung around our necks, and a sprig of garlic in our girdles, and my Master's great boarhound to company us.

Come to the Barrow we spread the earth on the ground by the mound's side, Sir Magnus instructing me at any alarm we were to spring into the midst of it and draw a pentacle around us with the cold iron of his rapier; the which he laid, ready drawn, on the mould. Then we lit the Glorious Hand, and by light of it and the lanthorn began to dig at the mid point of the Barrow.

"Under the turf was light soil with certain trees that we had to remove, and beneath that a made soil of chalkstones. Under the turf first we found a slab of stone, of about the bigness of a coffin, laid flat. My Master noted there was on it no figure of Solomon his Seal, so we left it and dug on a wider compass. You shall understand we got no further than the chalk that night, for the candles of the Hand burnt out; so home we went, wearied, as dawn was coming, to rest and make more candles.

"To be short, 'twas the third night ere we came to anything save chalk. That night was windy and cold and whitely starlit. We had to hew a niche in the side of our burrow to shelter the Hand from

the blast, but a man works lustily in cold, and ere midnight we ended the chalk, and part of our burrow's side falling, there fell with it a great figure that I took for Aaron his Calf of gold, it being of wood thickly gold-encased—"

OLIVER clapped his hands in rapture. "Miss Bartendale! You were right all through! You couldn't help the accident smeared the inscription off the blade, but you did lead us after the Warlock."

"The old brute!" said Madame Yorke. "Still, he's interesting, and some brutes aren't. Please go on, Mr. Covert."

Goddard resumed: *"I was affrighted at first, but Sir Thomas laughed—saying no harm was done as there was no graving on the figure. Moreover, the dog sat unmoved. 'And', says my Master, 'she will warn us if ghostly visitant cometh anear.' So we propped up the figure again and presently dug to a wooden flooring. 'Unsealed and uninscribed,' saith Sir Magnus; 'we may safely break it up.'*

"Wherewith he searched out where two wide planks ended, put his pick-tip under and heaves one up. 'Twas a great feat, but my Master had the strength of four men. To make space for his working he sent me to the top of the digged pit, and awesome it was here, with him down in the hole, the Glorious Hand burning steady in the calm that was there, whiles the wind hooned fiercely around me, with the roar of racked trees and the soughing of strained undergrowth in its breathy cry. Finally Sir Magnus heaved aside the second plank, and out rushes as it were foul air, that made my head to swim. And out went the candles of the Hand.

"Mayhap my senses failed me awhile, there betwixt the dark of the pit and the dark trees and sprinkling of stars. Then was I roused and the hair of mine head stood up by reason of a cry from Sir Magnus down in the pit. 'It is coming—it is coming! Sathanas, avaunt!—In Non—*'and he gabbles the exorcism of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; his great manly voice rising to a woman's scream. Then: 'Look to thyself; to the holy soil, Jack!'*

"At that the hound begins to whimper, and from the blackness of the pit there comes a cry that is neither laugh nor wail, man's voice, nor beast's, nor daemon's, but compound of all. I turned me round about and fled down the Barrow's side and at a bound to the middle of the consecrated earth, seizing the lanthorn as I went, and so stood there, with lanthorn and garlic in mine hands. Out of the pit comes the daemonic howling again and again, mixed with screaming from the hound, then over the pit's brim upleaps Sir Magnus, a last long bark snapping short behind him, into the light's extremest rays. One moment he stands there, then flings himself down on the holy soil beside me, and so sits gasping while I put down the lanthorn and with the naked iron draw the pentacle around us both. So sat we with the lanthorn between us and its upcast rays making our faces strange and dreadful, most especially my Master's, that was all blooded and with bites and tears on it, his hands and forearms being in like case.

"'It hath escaped!' he groans. 'What I know not, and how I know not. Only I felt something coming as the hand went out, and I fought, all hood-man blind; yea, even to use of teeth and nails, and the blackness went red—and so came the light of the lanthorn in my face.'

"Whereat I cry: 'The dog, sir?'

"And he: 'She fought likewise—' and he flashed the light round, and behold the poor animal lying at the Barrow's foot, beyond our earth, dead and most shockingly handled with tooth and claw and her head near dragged from the shoulders. At which sight Sir Magnus cried out that she had died for him, and makes a long arm and pulls the body beside us, saying it shall not be further mauled dead that suffered in life for him. Then he redraws the pentacle round us, that was broken by his reaching over its line."

"BRAVO," said Oliver, "the old fellow wasn't such a hopeless case after all! We ought to overlook a lot for that dog's body. Eh, Miss Bartendale?"

Luna looked at him freezingly. Swanhild frowned, and Goddard went on.

"'And what now, sir?' I ask, looking round at the dark wherein might snook some foe of soul and life alike.

"'To await daylight in this our harbour, Jack,' he replies, taking the light and turning it round as far as its beams may reach; which showed whereabout anything might lurk and hide.

"No doubt 'twas but a short while we waited, for the lanthorn candle was not burnt out when slats of grey shewed between the trees, but a life of alarm was lived in our pentacle. At last came first dawn and we could see in a way. Sir Magnus took the light and stepped to the Barrow. 'Now is the time when evil sprites have no power,' he says, with no word

about God Who had preserved us. 'We will explore our pit, Jack. What we have let loose is of power resistless at night, sith it blew out our hand, but the mischief is done and we will conclude our business in daylight.'

"So I lay on my belly over the pit's edge while he went down. And it was a grave he had opened, for under the raised planks lay a skeleton in armour, disposed seemly head to West. Nay, rather, there was a cuirass of mouldy leather with horn and iron rings on it, all fallen flat, and at its hem thigh bones—one broken by stamping of Sir Magnus on it as he fought hoodman-blind—and leather greaves, and a pair of shoes fallen this way and that. And over the cuirass was a helmet, horned and winged with bronze and gold, and beneath the helmet two monstrous golden plaits lying to the beginning of the thighbones. And on the left plait a round target with a sign on it like the Cross Potent of heraldry, and by the right a great broad sword, all massed rust, and across the thighs a doubled bladed axe, and below the shoes the hilt of a sword golden and engraven, and a leaf-shapen blade broke in three several pieces and green with verdigris.

For some breaths' space my Master remained astride of the hole, staring down. Then gave a great laugh and cried: 'I fancied we had thrust unmannerly into a gentlewoman's final withdrawing-room, Jack!'

"And so stoops down and plucks from between the plaits two tufts of golden hair. "Moustachio'd like a Don Spaniard,' he says, then, musing: 'I do remember—on a time, squires wore their hair in plaits. Welladay! The Monster loosed, the mischief done, Jack, we may as well pouch this comely golden sword, for its inscription's sake.' I remonstrated, but: 'We'll pouch it,' he returned, 'moreover, something seems to tell me we can do it without danger. Also the writing on it is not utterly strange to me— Now, how do I remember all this, Jack? Can it be the sprite of the golden-plaited Squire is discoursing with me? This is a ship I stand on—I know it. That image is the figurehead—I know it— Why, body o' God, Jack, how know I all this?'"

Oliver interrupted eagerly. "I knew it all, too, when I spied the figurehead."

"History repeats itself, Mr. Hammand," answered Luna. "The Warlock, like you, had an uprush of inherited memory. Pray go on, Mr. Covert."

"As a matter of fact, this is the end of the connected portion," Goddard answered sadly. "Of the rest I can give the baldest summary, collected from infinitesimal fragments of mss. It appears Sir Magnus and Slinfold sprinkled churchyard mould on the armed skeleton, replaced the planks; with more mould on; and then filled in the hole. For the rest the Warlock told Slinfold that he never saw anything of what he fought in the excavation, and attributed his keeping his reason and escaping alive to that circumstance.

"Soon after the occurrence Slinfold lost his power as a *skyrer,* and was apprenticed, by his own request, to a surgeon. He could only speak from hearsay of the tragedy of the hidden room and the Warlock's reason for buying the Pardon. He ridiculed the idea that Sir Magnus had been engaged in offering his beloved youngest son to the Devil when Lady Hammand came in and died of the sight. He thought the Warlock was merely using the boy as *skyrer* when the Monster unexpectedly manifested itself, and that it was through his remorse for meddling with necromancy, in the shape of the hand, and so loosening the Monster from the Barrow, that the Warlock could not bear to live.

"That ended the Slinfold-Blount narrative. From it Culpeper learnt that the Monster was loosed from the Barrow about midnight on the third night of the New Moon, February, 1520. At this point the document peters out into a few scraps past deciphering, so we don't know to what conclusion the Astrologer arrived."

GODDARD folded his papers. "An irritating discovery," he ended. "We should have found out what the Astrologer had to say about his deductions, not simply how he found his data."

"Quite the contrary." Luna's eyes scintillated. "I know enough of Astrology to be sure that the times he fixed were too vague to be of practical use. However, honest work is never lost, though the worker may not see the results. Providence allowed Blount live over a century so that he might hand to Culpeper information that was of no use at that date, but which may prove my clue of clues three centuries later. It's dusk now, and all the sightseers who have been about to-day in consequence of our work yesterday will be clear of the place. Who will go to the Barrow for the Runestone?"

"The Runestone?" repeated Goddard.

"The stone the Warlock left where he found it. Do you remember what he said

of it, according to Slinfold, Mr. Covert?"

She held his eyes mockingly. "That Solomon's Seal was not on it," he began, and suddenly saw the significance. "Why, from the way he put it—he did not say it was plain—"

"Precisely," Luna rose. "The particular symbol he looked for was not on it, but he didn't note it was plain. Ergo, it was inscribed. We shouldn't be long getting it; it is apparently under the turf a little out of the radius of our work yesterday. You and Swanhild ought to be able to get it out, and Mr. Hammand will help carry it."

They straightway loaded a couple of spades on the Mercedes, and within an hour the stone was out on the grass of the Barrow top. It was half as wide as an ordinary tomb-stone, as long, and twice as thick. Luna had come provided with a clothes' brush and a copy of the hilt-runes, and straightway she was on her knees, cleaning the caked mould from the signs deep cut in the stone on back and front. It had to be turned over before she found what she wanted and, looking up, gave a nod and a glance of almost frightened triumph to Swanhild, while she pointed from the photograph to a group of signs on the stone. A replica of the sword-runes came half-way down the longer one.

"It's what you wanted?" suggested Oliver, polite, pleased.

Luna became null and non-committal at once. "I cannot tell, Mr. Hammand, but it makes a new line of enquiry."

"We'll photograph it; I dare not trust it to the railway," she said, not long after, when it lay on the rug under the Warlock's portrait. "And we'll take the photos up to Professor Meikelsen by the first train tomorrow."

"Oh, really, you said you'd stay till tomorrow evening," protested Oliver.

"No use trying to stop Luna when she's decided to hustle, Mr. Hammand," said the elder guest. "She never does anything she can shift on to anyone else, but when she starts to do anything she's as energetic as a monkey possessed of what you'd call the Poor Man."

Luna smiled at the tribute. "You think I hustled too much over the Barrow, Mr. Covert," she said, and Goddard reddened, for that was what he was thinking. "No labour is lost, however, as I observed about your deciphering of what the late Mr. Culpeper noted. I gained priceless data from yesterday's work. Only we must not cherish too much hope," she added, hurriedly looking at Swanhild's eager eyes. "We still have a thousand years of mystery against us."

That night Goddard read down, C, G. O, Q, and S, in the dictionary again, lest he might have missed a pregnant word. It was in vain, and the Slinfold narrative added to the maze.

THE guests departed betimes next morning. Goddard helped to escort them to Hassocks, and spent the rest of the day in supporting Oliver and Swanhild under a renewed Press infliction, reports of the Barrow operations having sent fresh swarms of reporters and sightseers to infest Dannow from the Shaw to the manor front door.

He reaped the reward for his efforts to brighten others that night, for at first sight of a photograph of the hidden room inscription which he had procured from Oliver an illuminating recollection was roused. A retrospective picture of Luna when she first studied it. She had read to ". . *under stars, sans* . . ." then glanced down at the gap. The French *sans* was commonly used in medieval England, together with other Gallicisms: could the missing word be French?

He consulted the French dictionary left over from his schoolroom days, without result, and decided to run to London next day and purchase the fullest one, containing archaic words, he could find.

Next day, Thursday, found the newspaper-got flood still high. At noon came a telegram for Swanhild. The runes had been read overnight and Luna wanted all three to come up to Chelsea that afternoon, for a sitting.

Not having seen her for a couple of days, Goddard was struck by the change in Luna since her first coming. She had developed a line over the forehead, and her hands were not very steady. It was easy to diagnose her appearance as that of a very strong-willed person keeping down overstrung nerves with difficulty. Madame Yorke even seemed distinctly harassed, behind the mien of genial disapproval she had worn since the beginning of the sittings.

This one differed from all that had gone before. Luna would not let them know the translation of the runes. She produced two typed sheets of foolscap. "Duplicates," she announced. "When you are in trance, Mr. Hammand, Mr. Covert is to read one over to you, and note if you recognise any words or sentences. No," she added, holding them behind her; "you are not to read them first. We have to avoid putting ideas

into your head, you know. After waking you we shall read the second copy, mark what you recollect in a waking state, and compare the two."

"It sounds interesting. Why don't you do the reading yourself?"

"Because I know what I think you ought to recognise, and so do Auntie and Swanhild in some degree, and any of us might give you a hint, unconsciously, by a change of voice. We must leave you alone with Mr. Covert, also, to obviate any chance of unconscious thought-transference. Please sit there."

Oliver had reached the point at which a command and gesture from her sent him at once into a trance. Left alone with him Goddard found it rather loathsome. Oliver, having received instructions from Luna, could hear what he said, but apparently could not see him; staring with unspeculative eyes, and answering in a flat lifeless voice the queries that were read aloud. Like the animated corpse of old Oliver, Goddard thought. He worked carefully through the sheet and then called the women back.

Luna's hands shook and her eyes seemed to shoot sparks through their golden veil as she scanned the marked paper. Finally she gave a look of meaning to Swanhild, who was peering over her shoulder. "As far as it counts, not bad," she whispered. Then she waked Oliver.

"Let's be comfortable while you read the other sheet, Mr. Hammand," she said. They seated themselves round the fire and Oliver read aloud:

"Do you know anything of the following?

SALVATOR ROSA.
RATTOTSKAR.
HVARENO.
VISHNU SIRANGUAN—

"What a queer muddle!" He broke off.

"I concealed what I hoped you'd recognise in a jumble of any chance words that occurred to me."

"Oh, I see. To see if I'd pick out what you expected? Well, Salvator Rosa's a poet or sculptor, or something. Vishnu's a Hindu god of some sort. I don't know the others. Hullo, there's an old friend in the next line—ODIN."

"What does the word suggest?"

"Myself sitting on the foot of Swan's bed and reading a book we had about Norse heroes to her when we were convalescing after measles."

OUT of the list that followed he recognised a few classical names, and the following words and sentences:

" 'THOR', another Norse god, I remember.

" 'BALDUR', another of them.

" 'TESTE DAVID CUM SYBILLA,' I don't know the words but they go to a tune like this'; he tapped on his knee the *Dies Irae*.

" 'AESIR LOK'. It sounds like Loki; more Norse. I think he was the villain of the measles book.

" 'SIGMUND'—he's in Wagner.

" 'MIOLNER'—I half-know that, but am not sure."

He stopped, having reached the end. "In a waking state you have identified five of the words I hoped you would," said Luna. "In hypnosis you picked them out, and five others as well: RATTOTSKAR, YGGDRASIL JORMUNDGANDR, EINHEIRAR, and FIMBULVETER."

"I don't know those," he protested.

"In hypnosis your awakened memory did. They are all from ancient northern religious tradition. You Hammands have been English Christians for ten centuries at least, but for scores of centuries before your ancestors were pagans; and echoed echoes of their religious ideas were ingrained in your brain, and can be wakened to active knowledge when you are hypnotised."

He nodded slowly. She consulted Goddard's notes on the first paper. "You recollected vaguely the name of Sigmund, a merely mortal hero, but described Odin as the ALLFATHER, Thor as owner of the hammer Miolner, Baldur as the spring god, Lok as the devil. Ygdrasil you said was the Holy Ash Tree, the Einheirar you called deified heroes, Jormundgandr something long and round, and Fimbulveter the Final War."

"Well?" he asked. "Waking, I don't know them; as I said."

"You have a wonderful subconscious recollection of what your ancestors believed in when the bronze blade was new."

Then she began to discourse about it: what people believed when the blade was new. Jormundgandr, the serpent that held the sea in place round mid-earth, the Holy Ash, under whose branches the souls of the Einheirar—heroes slain in battle—feast until the Fimbulveter-Tide: when they should ride over the Rainbow; Bifrost Bridge—to help Odin and the other gods in the Final War with the devil-gods of Helheim. And the death of the gods, and the dying of the world, and

the resurrection of them all, and the riding of them over the reviving earth.

Goddard could not deny it was tremendous in its way. Luna's fine, impassioned voice had something to do with the charm; and the sheer, clanging syllables of the ancient names themselves; and the barbaric splendor of the myths. When she stopped he woke up with a little gasp, and saw Swanhild's eyes wide and shining like stars, and Oliver blinking and staring. Only Madame Yorke was wide awake and calm; who had posted herself out of the radius of her niece's magic eyes. "As you talked," said Oliver, slowly, "it made me think of Wagner, and something beyond Wagner. The Ring music and something beyond it."

Goddard could not help an emphatic nod. Old Oliver had voiced his own feeling exactly.

"Yes, Wagner," Luna assented. "He embodied in the Ring his remarkable hereditary memory of old Scandinavian intellectual atmosphere. Aristotle said of the Elysian Mysteries that he considered the initiated did not learn anything in definite words, but received certain impressions that produced certain conditions of the soul. That is what is done by my reminding you of the beliefs of your ancestors—"

She broke off and looked full at Goddard. "It seems rather a deviation from the business in hand, eh, Mr. Covert? Only very soon I shall tell you all why it is not so long a way from the Danish Undying Monster to the Old Danish Day of Doom."

Goddard did not forget a huge French dictionary, and at night he settled down to read the necessary sections. C, G, O, Q, and S, in search of six letter words ending in L or Z. It was about midnight when the word and its meaning leapt at him from the page, and nearly until dawn came he was still sitting trying to grasp its ramified meanings.

It was past his understanding in some directions, only the horrible core of it was plain. Six letters—and he understood the ritual, and why Reginald Hammand and Magnus the Warlock killed themselves. Why the others who saw it pined away. Why the Warlock's wife died of what she saw. Why Swanhild and Luna could not tell him about it.

Thousands of years of it, from Oliver and Swanhild back past the Viking whose dust they had disturbed two days before; perhaps past the Bronze Age warrior whose blade was its first fixed point in Time. Sumless generations, and the Monster ever at their elbows, undying while son followed father. From before the Bronze Age to the twentieth century of salvation.

Undying.

Undying to Swanhild and Oliver—no, thank God, not to Swanhild. Only to Oliver—*to* Oliver, and an inquest in a little inn, with the worst result of civilisation ready to bruit it to the ends of the world if a couple of louts were in danger and the shame incredible of a hundred generations must be told to save them.

All explained in six letters.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE FIFTH DIMENSION

GODDARD did not wake until very late that Friday. After two days of rain and enervating mildness the morning was dry and breezy, with some frost on the Down heights and a little sunshine over it. A day to assist thought, the dreadful truth became more incredibly logical and more revolting as he tramped in the direction of the Manor.

By an impulse he turned into the church and inspected the brass. Coming out of the lych gate he almost ran into Oliver. He caught himself starting violently and drawing a sharp breath. The word in cold print was bad enough, the reality embodied in one of its living victims was shocking.

"Cheer-o, old man!" said Oliver. "You jumped a bit! Church doesn't appear to agree with you in the morning."

"I was looking at the brass," Goddard blurted. He had to say something, and nothing else came to his mind. Self-consciousness foreign to his nature possessed him, and he dreaded lest it should betray itself in his manner, in an unintentional stare or too hurried withdrawal of his eyes from Oliver's frank regard. He felt a sudden consciousness of what a good sort Oliver was. How the kids used to hang round him in the refugee camps in Flanders—and oh, why hadn't a bullet found him in that same Flanders! It all flickered through Goddard's brain while he made his stupid reply.

"Did you spot anything about it?" asked Oliver.

"Nothing," replied Goddard truthfully.

"Miss Bartendale knows all, and we'll know before long," said Oliver. "We got a letter this morning asking Swan to run up

early. She's got some information sooner than she hoped, and is coming down with Swan this evening; and Mrs. Yorke too, of course; to hold a final sitting in the hidden room. They want you to assist, so will you come round and dine?"

"Of course I'll come." Goddard felt a great calm at the prospect of unburdening himself.

"Then shall I pick you up as I return from Steyning? I've got some business there, and ought to be on the way home about four."

"Right-o." Here a charabancs swept past, involving the two men in its wake of powdered chalk, petrol fumes, and strident remarks.

"That's the place—them trees up there—it didn't 'arf eat the poor gal; didjer see the *Daily Post* ercount, and wot the doctors said? Fair made me sick, it did."

Real frost developed during the afternoon, dusk and dark culminated in clear starlight, checkered by the clouds that drove in flocks over the sky, driven by a bitter wind. At six o'clock the earth was faintly starlit, the valley full of soft frost-fog, the Shaw louring purple-black under the spectral greyness of the Monstrous Man.

All horribly like the night of the Monster's coming, so Goddard reflected as he stepped into Oliver's car. The drive was a silent one until they had left the village behind and were near the Manor turning.

"We're late," commented Oliver suddenly. "They'll be there before us. Gone to sleep, old son?"

Goddard started. He had unconsciously fallen into a reverie, reflecting that the old conception of the Monster—a ghastly, ghostly horror ready to materialise out of night without warning—was preferable to what the six letters had told him. Before he could reply:

"Hullo, what's that?" exclaimed Oliver.

It was Will Cladpole, racing for home, humped over the handlebars of his cycle. The car overshot him; he shouted, pedalled fiercely, and clutched the hood to keep beside it. His face was white and frightened. Oliver applied the brake.

"Oh, Mus' Hammand, sir!" the boy bleated. "There's murder a-goin' on if summun don't stop it! Down in t' Shaw, sir! I heard of her shriekin' out—"

"What on earth are you talking about?" demanded Oliver.

"The lady as went into t' Shaw, sir! With the gem'man as takes pictures for the noospaper; the *Post,* Sir! There was a lot on 'em, in a big car, sir, a' goin' to t' Shaw. What nobody does arter dusk, you know, sir. An' I follered, an' they went in an' in a minute she shrieked out awful. That awful, sir, that I just didn't go in, but nipped right back to t' road."

It was all delivered like one sentence, and he stopped breathless. "Pull yourself together," Oliver ordered, in a voice Goddard remembered from Flanders days. A low, round voice that suggested command and the capacity to deal with any situation that might be impending. "Are you telling us some woman's being murdered in Thunderbarrow Shaw?"

"I'm tellin' you, Mus' Hammand, sir. She screamed awful. They left the car outside an' went in; you can see its lights."

THE hedge blocked all view of the Shaw at that point. With one accord Oliver and Goddard jumped out and ran to a gap. Over the valley, at the end of the Roman byroad, above the mist level and at the rim of the Shaw, was a little red light.

"Nobody has any business to be in that Shaw after dark," said Oliver, running back to the car, and jumping in.

Goddard seized his sleeve. "You mustn't go, old man," he cried. "Remember what you promised—"

"A woman in danger—Miss Bartendale would understand—" Oliver replied curtly.

"Oliver—I'll go, you stay—" Goddard stepped up beside him.

"Old man, it's my Shaw, and my Bane. I'm going."

"Oliver, you don't understand! It's only you there's danger for—only—" Goddard broke off, conscious of the boy staring and listening from the road. "You mustn't go —" he cried, and sprang at Oliver and caught him round the body, pinioning his arms and trying for a ju-jitsu hold. Any sort of hold—it would pay to break one of Oliver's arms—anything to keep him out of the Shaw. "For Heaven's sake, old man, just wait while I tell you by ourselves—"

"While a woman's in danger, old son!" the other man replied. "If you won't come—"

"I'll go, but you must not!"

They grappled then. Oliver was half as heavy as Goddard, and many times as strong; strong enough to do a rouch act harmlessly. He plucked Goddard from himself as though he were a child, swung him at arm's length, and sent him reeling backwards across the road.

Goddard pitched over in the embrace of the hedge, dragged himself out in a clutching tangle of bramble trails, and saw the rear light of the little car vanish back towards the village. Without a word he snatched the cycle from Will, mounted, and raced off in its track.

He drove the pedals frantically, almost standing on them, but the car light grew smaller and smaller. It disappeared from sight, turned into the Roman cutting, while the cycle was skimming bumpily over the village cobbles. He went the length of the street like a flash, looking neither to right or left. At the proper point he turned rather by instinct than sight and the cycle shot headlong but smoothly to the trough of the valley, into delicate fog that made everything invisible beyond the lamp's glare, ran along the level, and began to climb. To Goddard fog and sky alike seemed to be crossed by letters of fire writing before him the completed line of the rhyme:

"GAROUL: HAMMAND: WARE: THY: BANE:"

Up the slope loomed soughing blackness that was the Shaw, below it two red lights scintillated. He jumped off behind the little car where it stood untenanted behind an empty five-seater, and took a hurried glance forward. In the depths of the Shaw was a little glow, and on the wind there came to him through the stirred trees the echo of a woman's voice. Acting on a half-formulated thought, he snatched a rug from the car and slung it over his shoulder as he raced into the wood towards the light.

It was in the clearing before the burnt beech, down wind from it voices came to him as he ran; and once a squeal as of bodily pain or incipient hysteria. Speeding blindly, he stopped just short of colliding with a figure that bulked between him and the light.

"Oliver! Thank God!" he exclaimed.

Oliver, at the leeward rim of the clearing, was hidden from it by a thicket. He turned his head. "You, Goddard!" he exclaimed.

"Come away at once, dear old chap!" Goddard begged. "You should not be here, you know—"

"They shouldn't be here." Oliver indicated the clearing. "It's that blighter with an Oxford accent and Filbert hair—Miss Bartendale's Press jackal—"

His voice was hoarse with suppressed indignation.

"You promised Miss Bartendale not to come in," Goddard urged. "Come away. Let me settle them, whatever they are—"

"It's *my* Shaw, old man! As to what they are—look! A séance, if you please!"

WHILE the men talked singing had come spatteringly down breeze to them. Goddard glanced in. A motor lamp stood on a fallen log, its light turned to them, and in that Curtis of the *Post* leant against a tree, pencil and notebook in his hands, and looked across at the burnt beech. Owing to the efforts of souvenir-hunters, the interior of the beech was open to view; a woman stood there, Goddard could see her face dimly in the starlight; holding hands in a ring with three others. They were singing "Lead, kindly Light." Goddard said: "Never mind them, Oliver!" and plucked at the bigger man's sleeve.

Oliver pulled his arm away. "I must clear them out. Just listen to that!"

The singing stopped, the woman in the tree spoke in a low, impressive voice. "Is the spirit of Katherine Stringer here?" she demanded, staring before her with unfocussed eyes.

A pause succeeded. Another woman gave a strangled, half-hysterical yelp. The medium then answered herself. Her voice, middle-aged and deep when she spoke in her own person, was screwed up to a falsetto travesty of a girl's. "Katherine Stringer is here!" it wailed.

"Answer me, Katherine," the medium said, in her natural voice. "To what was your death due? To man, beast, or spirit?"

"To the Hammand Bane," she answered herself in the falsetto.

"And what is the Undying Monster, Katherine?" another woman demanded. "It is a Vampire? Or an Elemental? Or one of the Hierarchy of the Outer Planes?"

"I must not tell you," the falsetto answered. "I can but say it is able to manifest itself in one moment of your earthly reckoning of time; it is not perceptible to the keen senses of even a dog; it tears and sucks, and devours."

All this came subconsciously to Goddard's ears while he spoke with Oliver. "It's an obvious rehash of what was said at the inquest," he whispered. "Why won't you come away, Oliver?"

"I can't leave them here, you know."

"Then order them off, and come away."

"I've heard if you interrupt a séance the women may have hysterics."

"Let them!" exclaimed Goddard. He was in a fuming agony, owing to the limita-

tions of his partial knowledge. It was evident that so far something was holding off what he dreaded, but he did not know what to do without the risk of blindly precipitating a catastrophe.

While they spoke the questioning went on. "But what does it look like, Katherine?" the questioner asked.

The falsetto replied: "I am barely as yet across the borders of the world of spirits, and have not the words to describe what I have learnt."

"But is it a vampire: a dead Hammand who can't rest in the grave?" persisted the querist.

To which the falsetto responded prudently: "I may not tell you of what has brought strong men to madness and suicide. I am but in the ante-chamber of this world."

"Hang it, I can't stand any more!" gasped Oliver. "That drivel—and on the spot where poor Kate met her death—women or no women—this abrogates courtesy!"

He stepped round the thicket. Goddard mechanically grasped the rug in both hands and followed him. His half-knowledge did not afford any information in the pressing question; whether to interfere bodily; or to wait supinely, hoping that the unknown restraining factor would continue to hold the Monster off. So the two stepped into the light and faced Curtis.

THE Mercedes must have arrived at the Manor about the time Will reached the high road. Mr. Hammand was not yet back, so Walton replied to Swanhild's enquiry. Swanhild involuntarily glanced behind her. The stars were very vivid in a moonless sky, the wind cold and dry. A Monster night.

"We have his promise," Luna whispered, answering her thought.

Madame Yorke went to her room, Luna stopped to look at a trophy in the hall, and Swanhild stopped to explain its beauties. Both were in the state in which people ache to chatter incessantly about things indifferent. After many minutes the telephone issued its call. Telephones are apt to clamour at any time, but at the sound both started, and Swanhild hurried to answer it.

She seemed to be switched back a fortnight, for it was Will's voice and the words of the midnight call two weeks before. "Hello, the manor—send Miss Hammand—quick!"

"It's Miss Hammand, Will. What's wrong?"

"It's the Monster, miss! At least Mr. Hammand's in the Shaw and somebody's murderin' somebody there. I heard her shriek—"

Swanhild was surprised at her own coolness. "Are you telling me my brother is in the Shaw?"

"Goin' there, miss. I heard of a lady shriekin' in it. I saw her go in, and heard her shriek, and came away and told him. And he pitched Mr. Covert out and set off for the Shaw."

"You mean my brother's going to the Shaw?"

"He must be there now, miss."

"And Mr. Covert, what of him?"

"He took my bike and started after the car. He didn't want Mr. Hammand to go, and Mr. Hammand chucked him into the hedge."

"Very well. Stand ready to open the gate for me." She rang up the garage. "Stredwick! Have you berthed the Mercedes?"

"Not yet, miss. I thought I might have my tea first, miss—"

"Good! She's plenty of petrol in. Run her round at once. At once, mind!"

She turned to find Luna behind her. "The only thing that would make Oliver break his word, Luna. Some woman in trouble in the Shaw. He's there, now, and Goddard is following him."

Walton stood beside Luna. Swanhild noted, quite calmly, the other woman's face was white but perfectly reposeful, only the close-drawn lips and the eyes smouldering under levelled brows indicating the dynamic force in leash. "You ordered the car round," said Luna. "Can we overtake Mr. Covert at least?"

"No. It is just a few minutes too late—" Swanhild paused and considered. "Not by the road," she amended, suddenly. "I remember—by the borstal we might intercept Goddard."

"There'll be three—" began Luna. "No, I forgot, the woman's there already. We may be in time to save Mr. Covert. What of the borstal?"

She buttoned up her coat as she spoke, Swanhild mechanically followed suit. "Reggie once drove the Maxwell down the turf beside the borstal. It was touch and go, by daylight, but I'll do it, or break my neck," she replied. "The roadway is hopeless. By this I can get to the Shaw in five minutes—or be killed."

"Oh, Miss Swanhild, the borstal bridge

will be under water, with these rains!" protested Walton.

She ran and opened the front door. From the left the Mercedes purred up and Stredwick jumped down. Without wasting any time the two sprang into their places. The car seemed to take the moat bridge at a stride and shot down the avenue with the throttle open. Then Swanhild turned the car to the left.

A SECOND later she saw before her a fan of light running over the short Down turf with the white line of borstal twinkling along the right-hand extremity of it. The white line was her guide, to the left of it the Maxwell had been driven. The angle of the slope steepened suddenly, the tilt at which the car rushed down it almost flung the occupants on the screen. Swanhild leant back and watched the rim of the light flow downwards, the white line of safety ever near its right extremity. "Look for the bridge, Luna," she ordered, in a hissing shout that carried through the noise of engine and wind.

Luna stood up, leaning back against the seat to keep her balance. Far in front she could see the dark bulk of the Beacon, topped by the glimmer of the Monstrous Man. At the bottom of the valley between, crossing the barely discernible line of sheep-track, was a rippling line, dirty steel-colour in the fog. On the wind there came to her a sharp, crackling echo. There was no mistaking the hideous, half-human note, far though it had carried.

"The bridge?" Swanhild repeated. "Is it overwater?"

Luna stared under level brows at the murk. "I see a kind of swirl and break in the stream; no timbers."

"Sit down," ordered Swanhild grimly. "We'll jump it, and at worst it's only drowning."

The angle became slightly less acute. She put the car almost on the borstal, and gave it a swift turn to the right when the edge of the lamplight flashed on water. It bumped violently, sank a wheel in the deep track, carried on out of it by sheer momentum, and splashed, thundering, and crashing, on the invisible bridge.

The bonnet drove through the stream like a ship's cutwater, and sent churned foam splashing over the panels. The car paused and seemed to sink backwards; recovered itself like a horse on its haunches; and landed on the opposite bank with a jar. Behind it sounded a rending of timber as the bridge collapsed.

There was now only a moderate slope up to the Shaw; as they breasted it a fusillade of the barking, unnatural howls burst forth. "There's a light creeping along the Roman road to the village—" exclaimed Luna. "I don't understand—" She broke off, bewildered, as the Mercedes stopped behind Oliver's little car.

She jumped out and unshipped a lamp. Swanhild seized the other. From the Shaw's depths the diabolic uproar of baying and barking came intermittently. Luna paused, with tilted chin and narrowed eyes, locating the centre of disturbance, then sped into the labyrinth with Swanhild behind her. She ran like a sleepwalker, picking her way through the tangle of trees and massed undergrowth without looking. As they ran the noises grew more distinct, they reached where the men had watched the séance, the monstrous screaming snarl droned out, a note of triumph in it, and Goddard's voice cried out shrilly. Luna swung the lamp in front of her and dashed into the clearing. Dead silence ensued.

OLIVER had stepped into the light before Curtis about the time Will neared home. "Do you know what you are doing here?" he asked, with menacing blandness.

"Reporting the séance," Curtis answered, too astonished for more than a bald reply, staring at the apparition that towered the best part of a foot above him.

"Also you are trespassing," said Oliver. His hand descended behind Curtis's head, bunched up the back of his collar and coat and the scruff of his neck in a grip made ferocious by the outraged sense of decency behind it, and administered a shake that jarred him from teeth to toes.

At Oliver's appearance the Medium stopped with her mouth open in the middle of a word, and silence held the four women for a moment. Then: "It's her!" one of them squealed: the grammatical reference being to their ghostly informant. "It's the Monster!" two others chorused, when Oliver advanced across the clearing, the lamp in one hand and the other dragging Curtis.

The Medium said nothing; she was hardened to violent interruptions of her performances. The circle came to pieces, and the three other pieces huddled round her, too startled for hysteria. They were young women, of differing types but alike in possessing the wild eyes of that faith that neither doubts nor reasons. The

medium was middle-aged, and inscrutable now she had got over her first alarm.

"No, ladies, it's merely the proprietor of this wood, in which you are trespassing." Oliver's voice boomed forth tranquilly. "You will doubtless have the goodness to leave this place at once, ladies." He released his prisoner in order to pick up a scarf dropped by one of them, and handed it to her with a bow. "That pine-lined ride is the shortest way back to your car," he concluded pleasantly.

The news man gathered together what was left of his dignity. "I am exceedingly sorry if we have annoyed you, Mr. Hammand," he began.

"It's only the presence of your friends that saves you from a worse assault," interrupted Oliver, in a low voice. "Go away before I lose control of myself—"

"Yes, get out, man, for your own sake!" supplemented Goddard. "You don't know what you are monkeying with, and you'll be to blame if anything happens—"

Oliver thrust the lamp into the Pressman's hand. Curtis took it without any more words, for the Medium was pulling at his sleeve meaningly, and hurried away with the women. Goddard linked his arm in Oliver's and took a step forward. Oliver stood firm. "Half a sec," he said. "Let them get away first."

Goddard felt his face wet and warm, for all the dry cold. To follow or not? Which would be the least evil? He sweated and trembled in the misery of his half-knowledge. To let things proceed without attempting to guide them; in blind trust that the unknown factor that was keeping the Monster manifestation away might continue to act to the end; might be fatal.

The light vanished and left them in a dusk that was darkness to them after its going. "For God's sake, Oliver, let's get out of this!" exclaimed Goddard, after a few moments' pause. "Miss Bartendale warned you—"

"I alone am in danger, and you know it," Oliver said. "but I also know all about it—"

"You know what the Monster is?" Goddard almost shouted.

"No, but I know the spell that keeps it at bay. I dug it out of my inherited memory. *Heysaa*— That's it. *Heysa-aa!* Why—what? Goddard, it's coming!"

His voice rose to a roar. "Run, Goddard! Run, run, man! It's coming—I tell you! *Heysa-aa-a-a-*"

The word began as a human shout, broke halfway, turned to the unspeakable droning snarl of the hidden room, and swelled into a crackling, roaring, screaming, demoniac howl. It was like the hoarded hunger and hate of all the ages, expressed in a voice that passed the bestial in its perversion of the human. Goddard sprang back a step. His eyes were now sufficiently adjusted to the faint starlight to distinguish movement; he saw Oliver's immense body drop to all fours and crouch back in momentary defensiveness while his eyes lit up and glowed red against the dark bulk of it.

A MOMENT they remained so. Goddard, paralysed by the glare of them, stayed motionless. Then they soared up, phosphorescently opalescent, with a predominance of red, like two sinful dead planets escaping from Hell.

Kate's delirious words flashed through Goddard's brain: "Something big as a house—" As the eyes rose he waked and acted instinctively. He leapt sideways and flung the rug over the rising stars, keeping hold of two corners. It was bearskin, stoutly lined, but it was torn in three at once, while the demoniac voice swelled into a burst of baying and the immense body whirled round on him.

Again Goddard stepped aside, and as he stepped he whisked part of the torn rug round his artificial arm. He was prepared as none of the other victims had been, though he knew any preparation would but stave off the end a while. The red eyes were over him again; he curved his real arm over his throat and presented the other before it as he went down under an irresistible weight.

He fell on his back, and so fought madly, again and again thrusting the insensate arm at the panting red-hot slavering jaws that strove to get at his throat, and the burning teeth that fixed once in his live arm and tore it hideously as he wrenched it away. Thus defending head and throat he staved off frantically, with feet and knees, the body that crouched over him. The rug did yeoman service with its loose, hindering fragments, but at last tearing fingers wore through the folds and raked the clothes from his shoulders, the red eyes were over his, nails tore at his chest, and a last triumphal snarl seemed to fill the world and vibrate the earth on which his head was pressed.

In a final effort he thrust the skin-wrapped arm upwards, the howl was cut short, in the sudden silence he heard the cracking of the artificial limb as the jaws

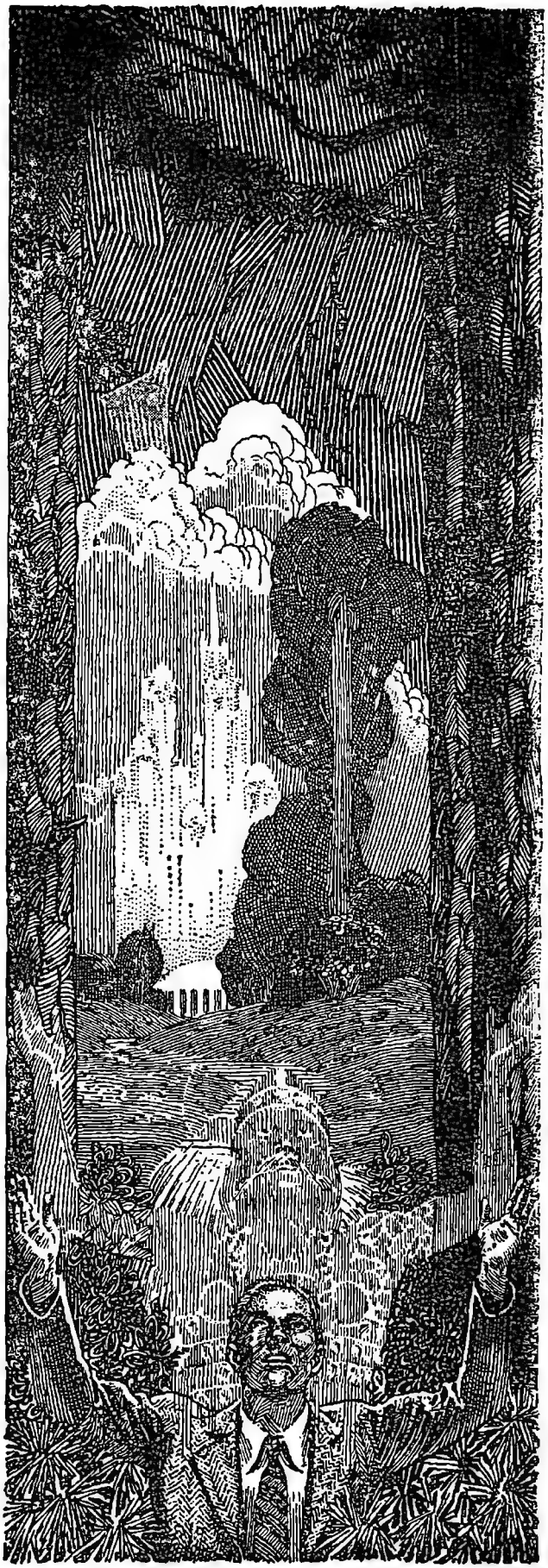
gripped it, and a white light swept over them like a wave. With the shock of it Goddard's thumping heart sucked and paused; he shut his eyes in the glare and fell back limply.

He only closed his eyes a moment, and opened them to this: He was flat on his back, his real arm crooked over his neck and a warm rain from it dribbling on his chin. His artificial arm was smashed and should have fallen limp, but was held up at full length, with ridiculous tatters of bear-skin drooping from it over his chest. Over it was the upper line of Oliver's teeth, and over them a demonaic travesty of Oliver's face. Oliver was on his knees astride of him, his palms just off the ground, the blood-bedabbled fingers convulsively crooked as Luna's hand on his forehead forced him backwards. She was bending over Goddard's head, the lamp trained full on Oliver's face, and Goddard knew he would carry the picture of it to the grave.

It was the face of Oliver Hammand, devil-obsessed or else turned by some Circean spell to an animal with power of hatred and cold cruelty beyond the human or bestial. His hair stood on end; under it his ears laid themselves backwards; his upper lip had almost vanished from sight in a diabolic snarl; the whole mouth, blood-smeared and slavering, was distended and sucked in at the sides. The jaws protruded abnormally, and the big teeth appeared to project still further forward, while the upper part of the face seemed to be contracted and sloped back into insignificance, a mere setting for the red eyes.

And the peculiar marvel was that the ensemble did not suggest the animal that is nearest man, but one quite diverse, for the face was fantastically wolfish, suggesting a man's capacity for hate blended with a wolf's ferocity and set in a body blended of both man and wolf and animated by a devil.

It was photographed on Goddard's brain while the arm dropped from the relaxed jaws. Oliver's face changed; his eyes lost their red and were stonily horror-struck; his jaws apparently retreated; his forehead came forward; his ears straightened and his hair subsided in damp curls. It all took but the few seconds that brought Swanhild to them, half a dozen paces after Luna. In those few seconds Oliver flickered back to his normal self, all but the blood on his mouth and fingers and the



"Rise, Volsung Sigmund, Odin calls his chosen heroes to the glory of the new heaven and earth!"

stony horror of his expression. Swanhild fell on her knees beside Goddard.

SLOWLY Oliver rose to his feet, without changing the pose of his head and arms, and stood astride of Goddard, arms taut, fingers crooked, and eyes staring glassily at Luna, who stood beyond Goddard's head with the lamp. Finally he said, in a thin, blank sort of voice, like the hollow shell of his normal bass, "I—I have gone mad. I'm not dreaming. I've gone mad—gone mad and killed Goddard."

"Not killed, old man!" Goddard cried reassuringly. "I was only exhausted for a minute."

Swanhild jumped to her feet and flung her arms around her brother, forcibly bringing the rigid hands to his sides. "You are not mad, dear dear old Oliver!" she almost cried. "You are sane, and you always will be—"

"I'm dreaming—" he said, tonelessly.

"No, dear, no! It's all right; perfectly all right, dear old boy!" Swanhild crooned, holding him tighter and tiptoeing to press her face against his. There was blood on her cheek when she canted her head to look in his eyes; he stared at her dully.

"There's blood on your face, Swan," he said. He slipped one arm up out of her hold, looked at the crimsoned fingers and clean back, drew it over his mouth, and eyed the resultant pink smear on it. "I am mad—or dreaming," he said, as though trying to find mental foothold. "I felt the Monster coming; coming round me; entering into me. And I wanted to kill you, Goddard—kill you and get at your throat with my teeth. Oh, say I am mad, for Heaven's sake!"

Goddard jumped up and caught his hand, squeezing it hard. "It's all right, dear old chap!" he declared. "Not your fault, and it won't happen again—"

"Won't happen again?" repeated Oliver. "How do you know? What do you know? Has it happened before?"

"Dozens and dozens of times, and no blame to anybody," Goddard assured him. "I know all about it. Do buck up and don't take it too seriously—"

Oliver pulled his hand away and put it to his head. His eyes travelled to Luna. "I shall go mad soon," he said quietly.

She stepped to him and looked him full in the eyes. "Mr. Hammand," she said slowly, "since this has happened it is best to tell you all simply and fully. You are not mad, though you attacked Mr. Covert just as a hungry wolf would have done. *Just as you attacked Kate Stringer here a fortnight ago—*"

"Oh, Luna!" It was Swanhild who interrupted.

"It is wisest and kindest to tell all at once," Luna went on unmoved. "The Monster did not enter into you, Mr. Hammand, simply because the Monster has never had any existence. It is purely a creature of the Fifth Dimension, and the Fifth Dimension is—the human mind."

She paused. The others stood in a bunch, Swanhild with her arms round her brother, Goddard grasping his hand firmly. The situation was past any words at the young people's command; both could only try blindly to impress on Oliver that their relations with him were unaltered. Luna's voice proceeded, cold as fate: "I have told you that a powerful impression on a human brain is passed along through the ages. A virtuous impulse, a vicious one, an unnatural one; all will repeat themselves throughout the centuries. You are in that way a victim, Mr. Hammand, of lycanthropy."

"Lycanthropy?" he repeated. "I seem to remember—"

"Lycanthropy is a form of erratic mania that causes the victim to imagine he is a wolf, and to act in accordance with that belief. It is a mental disease that has reached the form of an epidemic very often, and in the men of the line of Hammand it has become hereditary. It only appears when the victim is in a pinewood, in starlight, and with no human companion—"

"There!" exclaimed Goddard. "That's what I didn't know—*one* other person!"

Oliver's gaze never shifted from Luna. "Wolf madness?" he said. "I remember now—they called such people *wehr-wolves*, didn't they?"

"In German," Luna replied. "In Old English, *'turnskins'*; in French *'loups-garoux'*; in old French the term was *'garoul'*, as in the hidden room inscription."

She ceased. "I begin to understand," he said without emotion. "I'll realise by and by. How long have you known this, all of you?"

"Since Monday," Swanhild answered, and: "Since last night," Goddard chimed in. He continued to look at Luna. "Since I first saw the brass," she said.

"Since your first day here?" He spoke dispassionately, and it was the more dreadful for the grotesque disorder of his face, blood smeared and scratched and beginning to discolour where Goddard had

beaten it off. "You've known all the time I'm no better than a mad cannibal? That my ancestors were man-eating brutes in human shape? That if I had children they'd be the same? That I mauled and half ate a woman here—"

"I know that it was not you—yourself—it was an impulse of memory caused by the sin of an ancestor three thousand years ago."

"It's good of you to make excuses. I quite understand now. It explains everything. Pines and cold and starlight—and wolf-mania. Oh, I see it all—grandfather killed the woman he'd coaxed into the wood—and the Warlock started to eat his own child— Oh, I quite understand. Quite. Understand, you know." He smiled round at them. "By and by I'll realise it, I suppose. Cold, isn't it? We ought to go to the doctor and have your arm tied up, Goddard."

He strode into the pine ride. Swanhild ran and hooked her arm in his. He looked at her. "You've known it a week," he said. "You realise it, I suppose? Well, I shall later."

She only clung to him, and so they passed along the path. Luna and Goddard followed with the lanterns.

WHEN they reached the cars, Goddard halted. "Half a sec. all of you," he exclaimed. "We must explain how we got knocked about, you know, Oliver! Swanhild, you're able bodied about the hands, will you kindly take that bike and hurl it violently on its front wheel on the road? You all perceive my game? I had a small accident, and bumped into Oliver in the course of it, hence my state, and his face. Topping, Swanhild!"

She had fallen in with his suggestion and flung the cycle slanting along the path so that the front wheel buckled. "You'll steer the Maxwell, Miss Bartendale?" Goddard concluded. "I suppose you'll go with Swanhild, Oliver?"

While the two cars crossed the valley Goddard explained his discoveries to Luna. Oliver, in the other car, sat with head up and eyes drooping, silently regarding the blood-tipped hands folded on his knees. When driving permitted Swanhild placed her disengaged hand over them. He turned his head and looked at her with vacant eyes. "I'll realise by and by," he said. "At least you're the same, Swan, dear."

"Everyone's the same, dear old thing," she whispered back.

He smiled in a spiritless way. "They can't be, Swan. It's best to understand that at once."

People were flocking into the village street in knots from the south; in a way suggestive of a crowd returning from a sight; but the occupants of the cars were too intent on their own affairs to notice anything unusual. In the manor courtyard and hall there was a general hubbub; most of the house staff huddling about while Madame Yorke tried to persuade the terrified Stredwick to get some conveyance ready to take her on her niece's track. A hush fell as the cars appeared.

"It's all right, Madame Yorke." Oliver roused himself to address the guest in a voice meant for the audience in general. "Some spiritualists were holding a screaming séance in the Shaw, and Goddard and I had an accident after packing them off. That's all; I'm not hurt to mention, I'll just go and tidy myself a bit while Goddard is tinkered up. If I'm wanted to go for the doctor or anything I'll be in the Holbein room in ten minutes or so."

Luna gave her aunt a meaning glance, and swept it round to Goddard and Swanhild. "He's best by himself for a while," she whispered.

Within the ten minutes she entered the Holbein room. Oliver had turned on only one light, above the fireplace, and stood leaning on the mantelpiece. His face seemed flat and grey, curiously like the painted face of the Warlock above his head. There was a dull composure about his features. Luna had an irresistible impression that Sir Magnus had looked like that after his wife fell dead in the hidden room.

"Well?" said Oliver, his voice pleasantly unemotional.

"Mr. Covert's injuries are trifling. I came to tell you that while Swanhild and Auntie finish the bandaging. No need for the doctor."

"You came to reassure me. Oh, Luna, what's the use of pretending? You know what a dream I've had—and then to learn this!"

He almost cried it, with a break in his voice, and stretched out his hands appealingly. She would have taken them in hers, but he stared at them and drew them back. "There's blood on them!" he groaned.

"But there's none on your conscience!" she cried back, trying to snatch at them. He placed them behind him; she came close and put hers on his shoulders. Her bright curls barely reached his chin; irrelevantly there came to his mind a sunny

line from one of the sunniest works in England's radiant literature. "'As high as my heart,'" he quoted aloud and: "Oh, Luna, Luna!"

"Oh, Oliver, dear Oliver! You know it is hurting me as much as you—" She almost whimpered. Her face was drawn, her eyes wide black pools of anguish. For the moment her composure had dissolved and her underlip worked like that of a child on the point of breaking down. The temptation to stop its quivering in the easiest way presented itself, in that moment of revelation, as a mere obvious necessity, but in the fraction of a second it took Oliver to bring his hands round and bend his head something woke in him—the ingrained self-restraint that was too strong for temptation. He raised his head, and instead of closing round her, his hands lifted to remove hers from his shoulders. "I know it, Luna," he said gently. "I know it because I have dreamed dreams lately, and I know you would have let yourself dream them, too, but for your knowledge. Now I also have the knowledge, and perhaps it would be better if you did not touch me."

She drew back a step, composed again, and settled quietly in a chair by the fire. He seated himself opposite her, as quietly, and began to speak in a level tone. "It seems curious I don't feel excited," he began. "No, it isn't curious after all. One learnt that in war time: after a real disaster one was a bit numbed and quite cool. And this is a real cataclysm—waking from a dream to reality is the biggest cataclysm, isn't it? And it was such a heavenly dream: dreamed between the reality of war and the reality of hereditary madness—"

"Not madness," she interrupted. "Hallucination."

"WHAT does it matter what one calls it?"

"Hallucinations may exist in a perfectly sane mind."

"But hallucination that is hereditary is another matter, dear." He spoke as one who argues gently with the self-deceiving. "An hallucination that has led to murder and madness along the ages has got to stop. And it rests with me to stop it."

She was silent.

"I'm the last male Hammand, the last link in the chain—oh, it all fines down to me—no getting away from that! My ancestors thought it was an external evil spirit; we know it's in the brain, handed down from Hammand brain to Hammand brain, and that mine is now the sole repository of it, and must be the last. It's quite simple. And you knew it, Luna, while I dreamed dreams."

"I had your promise, and relied on it to avert accidents until it was time to tell you the truth."

"Quite wisely. No decent person could calculate what Spookery and the Press would do. I am not apologizing for my broken promise."

"I should have been surprised if you had kept it, in the circumstances."

"Exactly. We understand one another. That's where the bitterness is—" His voice broke, but he controlled it. "Only you know I was dreaming and did not wake me—"

"I had my reasons—"

"I can imagine it. You who are so learned and gifted; who can find out the secret thoughts of the long-dead and go through the minds of the living like so many books; you are human yourself and dreaded to end my dream—"

She looked up as though ready to speak, but checked herself. He went on: "It was your dream, too; no use trying to deceive one another. The dream came to both of us when we met. Only you knew it could never become reality. When was that?"

"I suspected from the first. The brass was decisive."

"You knew from the first day? You've suffered all this time? And you are the worst sufferer; I've only had to bear the shattering of the dream, while you have had to shatter it yourself. Oh, Luna dear, you are the greatest sufferer. Only—the dream—I didn't realize how lovely it was until now it's broken. The dream every decent man dreams—"

He glanced up at the portrait, and his voice hardened. "It isn't fair! He lived his dream before it was broken, and you have said he was to blame—his wife and kiddie, though! Good Lord, he may have suffered more!—but then he didn't lose *you*, Luna! He lived his dream—his ancestral house; his wife to make it home; his own little children to be loved and worried over—the dream every normal man has at the back of his mind, though he doesn't talk about it. Only I'm not a normal man—strictly, I shouldn't have been born at all—"

She hid her face in her hands. He checked himself. "Oh, yes, it was right I should. If it was only for the two hours during the retreat from C——," he went on in the tone of one who considers a question. "I was half as big again and five times

as strong as any man who was left alive. All thanks to generations of well-bred, well-living ancestors. That's why I was able to lift the Maxim into the gap and work it with the one hand I had fit to use; and that meant the grey-coats didn't get through before the Lancashires came up. They said it saved the line—my decent ancestors having bred me big and sound. It wasn't the line I considered, of course, but the crocked chaps behind me.

"We collected five lorry loads of them; a couple of hundred men with a fresh chance of life and fulfilled dreams; a couple of hundred who weren't stamped into the mud after all. The women of a couple of hundred men not needing to take up life without them—all depending, you know, on one of the sound strong arms I inherited—inherited straight from the Warlock's arms that swung that big sword at Bosworth. Oh, it was worth being born for, even if my own life had to be ruined—if only I had never met you, Luna! Are you crying, dear?" he ended gently.

"No!" came through the fingers interlocked before her face. "And if I were it would be for gladness that God hasn't made me love a man who would rail at Him in trouble."

"Oh, my dear, He didn't make you capable of loving a cur! My fate's just that of most people, after all. He allowed my forebears to hand to me mingled good and ill, a sound body to be of some service to my kind, a kink of the mind to wreck my own life because of the *noblesse oblige* that has also been handed down to me together with the blessing and curse. Oh, it was worth being born for; working the Maxim; I would not have minded dying over it—but it's another matter to go on living after meeting you and learning I cannot have you—living in the same world with you!"

She made a little movement, yet did not speak, for she knew it was good for him to talk freely after the shock. "But, of course, I've got to do it;" he went on. "Live, and bolster up the family reputation until the line dies with me." He stopped, and the dreary composure of his eyes gave way to a red light of horror. "Good Lord! Those poaching brutes! If they are arrested—"

She lowered her hands and her eyes looked into his. "A thousand years of disgrace—everything to be explained for the swine of the papers to exploit. I begin to realize it now—cannibalism, no less—past imagination—unique—" he stammered on.

She interrupted. "Not unique; there was a trial for it—on the high seas—in London thirty years ago. And men have been accused of it even in Sussex; Colonel Lunsford, and—"

"It's the last straw—that I may have to come forward and brand myself and my ancestors publicly. No, it is not—losing you is the worst!" Oliver sank his face in his hands. "With you I could have faced everything—"

Luna suddenly flung herself on her knees beside him. "Oliver, it's too hard. You shall have me; I'll stand by you, and nothing shall separate us. I was made for you, and God has brought us together, and He cannot mean us to be the victims of past folly and sin—"

"The *future* is our business, dear," he said.

"Why should we be slaves of the unborn future? Let the future look to itself, so long as I can make you happy. Your ancestors handed on the curse—"

THE man was suddenly very calm and collected. "They did it in ignorance, dear. We should do it deliberately."

"What does it matter? We only live once in this fine world—"

"There's a life after, and we are responsible to those who come into possession of the fine world after us. Just look forward, dear, forward to the Lord knows how many Oliver Hammands with their lives ruined—perhaps just when they'd met the women of their hearts—and who knows how many Kates hideously done to death! No, dear—"

"I can see it all; I have seen it all for weeks; and I do not care—"

"Of course you don't, dear; for the time You'd give your soul and wrong all the rest of humanity to make me happy temporarily. Only it would never answer. You'd come to your senses, and you'd hate yourself for stooping, and I'd hate myself for allowing you to stoop. You are learned and wise, and I'm commonplace, but in this matter the man must be master and save the woman from herself. And you know, dear, it might be better if you didn't touch me. I'm no Galahad, only a man who loves too well to sacrifice the woman he loves to her own love for him. Oh, my dear, you know how it hurts me—enough to give me some idea of how it must hurt you, Luna!"

She threw her head back. "It takes away part of the sting to learn I love a man so much better than myself, Oliver."

"Dear, I'm not, yet it is grand that you should think it! And perhaps I should not

have said I love you—though you knew it."

"I knew it," she replied triumphantly. "Only I had to have it in words before I could make you promise to marry me if the one loose link in my chain of investigation proves dependable."

His eyes stared incredulously into the calm starriness of hers. "Your chain?" he said.

"I did not forbear to tell you from cowardice, but because I hoped that when I told you of the Monster's nature I might perhaps give some feeble hope of its exorcism. Oh, do not hope, Oliver! One link is weak, but if it holds the Monster curse may be removed forever."

He put his hand to his head. "I've heard surgeons can do wonders—make blighters decent or idiots clever by operating on their brains—"

She laughed, an overwrought laugh. "Rubbish! Rubbish! Newspaper rubbish! A mental curse must have a mental cure—if one can find the First Cause. And I think I've found the cause—back in the Bronze Age; only one step is pure conjecture; one link uncertain. In a word, Oliver; if that link does not hold you must be the last Hammand, but if it holds you can marry me, for my fee, and let me stand shoulder to shoulder with you through life. Oh, don't hope, Oliver—" she burst out. "When I have told you all you will realize how doubtful the link is; but if it holds—"

In the middle of his amazement he heard a step. Quickly he sprang up and lifted her to her feet. The door opened; Swanhild came in and behind her Goddard, one sleeve empty and his hand bandaged, and Madame Yorke.

"Oh, Oliver!" cried Swanhild. "News has come from the lodge. The Ades were arrested half an hour ago. They resisted; that's what all the village was watching while we were in the Shaw. And Will learnt it was for—for poor Kate's death!"

Oliver turned to Luna with a bitter smile. "Thus passes, publicly, the good name of the Hammands!" he said.

THEY all remained at gaze a full minute. Then Oliver said: "I must 'phone the police at once. Those fellows must not remain in suspense."

"No!" cried Luna sharply. "Before we make a move we must clearly understand the business. A few hours' arrest won't hurt them."

"Their women—" said Oliver and Swanhild together.

"We must be just even to ourselves. The men brought this on themselves. In three hours Swanhild shall let their women know they will be released; but I, who am morally responsible for this arrest, demand three hours' delay. If only on my own account; for I have risked so much—even my professional reputation and personal good name—in the matter."

"I don't understand," said Oliver, bewildered. Swanhild hurried to him, clasped her hands over his arm and looked in his face wistfully. He contrived to smile at her desultorily. "I shan't commit suicide, at least, Swan," he said. "It was the only decent thing grandfather and the Warlock could do, as they were responsible for the presence of the victims. For me it's different—"

"Luna told me that from the beginning."

"I'm glad she reassured you. My course is to face life—and disgrace. At least you are the same always, Swan. God knew what He was about when He made sisters who *are* sisters. You'll always be the same. And you, Goddard?"

He glanced at the other man.

"Always the same, naturally. Even more so when I'm 'Mr. Swanhild Hammand,' and officially qualified to stand beside you before the world. You might know it without hinting a question."

Oliver's stark eyes softened a little. "I think I could get my bearings if I knew how much you all know—"

He looked at Madame Yorke. She answered quickly: "You know I'm Luna's confidante. She's told me every step from the beginning."

"Luna told me all last Monday night, when she feared she had got to a dead end, and I urged her—ordered her—to keep the secret and search further," Swanhild said in her turn.

Goddard chimed in. "Of course it wouldn't have been cricket for Miss Bartendale to tell me anything while you were in ignorance. I found out the missing word last night. I was investigating on my own because I distrusted Miss Bartendale's secrecy; Swanhild explained more while she tied me up, and now I know she has been preparing for the final step."

"The final step?" Oliver repeated.

"One hour's experiment in the hidden room," said Luna. "Oh, don't hope, for heaven's sake! I have practically no hope myself, but we must try if the one weak link of my chain proves unexpectedly strong."

"There can be no cure for hereditary madness until Judgment Day," said Oliver,

"and every man's Judgment Day is the day he dies—"

"For hereditary hallucination there may be a cure; if one can find the absolute cause." Luna switched to her professional manner, so strong is the hold of training. "Like most of the general public, you have never considered that any hereditary peculiarity must have a beginning. A beginning and a cause. Some things only God Himself can alter or cue, by such revolutionary miracles as He does not often work lest mankind should depend on miracles and cease to use its gift of reasoning. But in other cases He decrees that the power some of His creatures acquire by study shall culminate in what is a miracle slowly worked.

"I have told you the Fifth Dimension is the human brain; the lump of material grey matter which has the power to comprehend all the other dimensions. The solid Third Dimension of our material world; the nebulous Fourth Dimension of ghosts and fairies—all are enclosed in the human brain.

"But there's Dimensions beyond the Fifth, and one beyond it—far beyond it, though short of the Dimension that is God—is the Mind beyond the brain, the power of abstract thought that animates the brain. I have studied; I have investigated; God's grace has afforded unusual clues to the origin of this Monster mania; and it may be my portion of Mind outside the Fifth Dimension can mould and alter your Fifth Dimensional twist."

He shook his head. "Dear, you forget. Even if you should kill the hallucination I cannot have you linked to our disgraced name—"

"Oh, you man, you stupid man!" she exclaimed in exasperation. "That's what I've been searching for from the Bronze Age to Judgment Day!—the right to share your outward disgrace, if *our* consciences approve it!"

She had evidently forgotten the others for the moment. "Why, in any case I am involved already," she went on. "I must give evidence of what I have learnt in support of your confession. I may even land in the dock, for all I know."

"Luna!" he exclaimed.

Madame Yorke supplemented bitterly: "She may, she told us to-day. She will have to explain how she destroyed certain proofs, and that she knew the truth from the first day here and let suspicion rest on innocent men in order that she might shield you."

OLIVER had stared at her while she spoke. He turned his eyes to Luna again. "Yes," she answered defiantly. "There was a scrap of your silk muffler in the dog's mouth. Also some hairs that had evidently come from your moustache on its wounds. Any detective would have started to make deductions if he found them. You had bitten the dog, which had *not* done the assault on the girl—a man of your size could have torn the beast as it was torn, if he were in a state of dementia. The family history would become significant. Oh, I definitely gambled my reputation and all on the chance of those poachers not being arrested, when I hid those hairs and the scrap of silk and finally flung them out of the railway carriage."

"It was a desperate risk," he said.

She looked round defiantly and went on, her cheeks hotly pink and her eyes like wintry stars in the shadows upcast by the firelight round them. "I could never have a peaceful hour in life if I had not risked all I value on the chance of averting the scandal. I should have gone mad—I know I should—if I had left you to your undeserved fate without risking my all on the infinitesimal chance I saw of either averting the exposure or—making you a normal man."

"You think there is a way of stopping the Monster manifestations; of doing away with the inherited wolf-mania, short of my death?" he said. "That an hour's experiment will settle if I am to live disgraced and alone in the same world with you, Luna; or face and bear the disgrace with you always with me to comfort me and the right to comfort you in the disgrace you have brought on yourself for my sake? Oh, it's no time for pretence! We five understand one another. It is as I have said?"

"It is." Her voice was unfaltering.

"Then for heaven's sake let us have the experiment at once!"

The point gained she spoke very quietly, with the quietude of one facing a task that requires complete mental control. "We must have an explanation first, and certain preparations—"

"But the men?"

"They can stand it for my three hours. We will have the experiment before you surrender yourself to justice."

Her personality dominated them all, as it always did when she chose. In Oliver's eyes the red light was rising, it was the light of anxious hope, but it was fierce as that of the lycanthropy had been as he

began to realize that the ruin of his life—and Luna's—had a slender chance of averting totality. The shocks of the evening had been so many that his brain was still a little numbed, and the dawning hope of snatching something from the wreck dominated the horrors for a time.

"We will now make ourselves comfortable," said Luna, settling in her chair again. "We cannot be overheard in this waste of room, and I will explain briefly all about the Hammand Monster from the Bronze Age to the Norse Judgment Day."

CHAPTER IX

A NIGHT OF UNCLOUDED STARS

OLIVER posted himself in the shadow by one side of the fireplace, Luna sat full in the glow. Swanhild sat on a stool beside her brother and clasped one of his hands as they lay on his knees. Madame Yorke and Goddard were to Luna's other side.

"First," began Luna, "I must impress on you that a man's earlier ancestors matter to his history as powerfully as do his childish impressions. Subconsciously, the more striking incidents of our first years affect us to the end of our lives, and in the same way the more impressive experiences of those who lived in the world's childhood were bound to subconsciously affect their descendants to the end of time.

"Moreover, modern people are not so powerful, as a rule, either mentally or physically, as those of early times. Then, rough living weeded out all but the fittest and, in a sentence, there were giants on earth in those days. The men and women of early ages, also, did not addle their heads by incessant cursory reading and impotent worry over all the affairs of all the world. Therefore they had tremendous stores of vivid mental energy to devote to brooding; for good or ill; over the few thoughts that really concerned them, with a force that affected the structure of their brains and has sent echoes of their thoughts to us along the ages.

"Remember also, that Western mankind now can scarcely realize what religion was to those of far-back days. To the bulk of us in this age it is a mere subject for speculation; to our forebears, in the Bronze Age it was as real a thing as love and hate, fear and hunger. Yes, and even more powerful, for love and hate, hunger and fear could be overcome at the command of religious belief.

"Now to begin. Towards the close of the Scandinavian Bronze Age, about 700 B.C., the time of Hezekiah and Sennacherib in the East; you Hammands had an ancestor named Sigmund of the Volsung line, a great prince of the north. It happened, the Volsung race was hounded down until only two members of it were left alive, Sigmund and his sister Signy. And Sigmund only survived by fighting, tooth to tooth, with a wolf."

Oliver started. She nodded gravely to him. "I relate the tale baldly. Sigmund survived, but, maddened for the time by a share of grief, pain, and starvation beyond human bearing; he broke down in nerve and soul. He did what other men had done—cursed his god. Others have done it, but his curse took a specific form. He made a solemn vow that in the Final Warring, the Norse Day of Judgment, when all heroes shall come to life and ride behind the Asa Gods to the Final War with the Powers of Evil, instead of having him—Sigmund the human hero—to help them, they should find him opposing them, *as a wolf* on the side of the Evil Powers.

"Pray remember again how hard it is for us, in these days of Higher Criticism and Hyde Park oratory, to realize what blasphemy meant in older times. Remember, too, there was no shriving for sin; he who sinned must reap his condemnation. When he came to his right mind memory of his blasphemy never left Sigmund. Rather it increased in force, always lurking in the background of all his other thoughts.

"It was in a wood of firs and pines, on a frosty starlit night, that he fought the wolf and made the vow. Afterwards, when his fortunes were mended, he chanced to be in a starlit pinewood with one of his sons. The associations of time and place brought his long brooding to a head: lycanthropy was a common mania at the time, and he imagined the curse of his god Odin had come on him. In short, he had a fit of wolf-mania. Through heredity and suggestion combined, his son had a similar attack. They remained in that state, imagining they were wolves and behaving as hungry wolves would to all they met, until the daylight came and their senses returned.

"To make the story short: the impression on Sigmund's brain was so acute that it passed on to his descendants, and to this time at uncertain intervals a man has been born in his line liable to turn, mentally, into a wolf in this combination of circum-

stances:—A wood with pines and firs in it, a cold starlit night, and only one human companion. Do you understand?"

Swanhild answered. "As the smell of hot tar reminds us unconsciously of when our ancestor was at Derek Carver's burning, so the pines and the rest of the combination wake the older recollection."

"Exactly. When the Carver test was so successful I knew I was on the right track. Sigmund doubtless consulted his priests, and they told him the mania was a curse from Odin that would haunt his family for ever. In consequence Sigmund's male descendants were liable to turn werewolves; both because they inherited the brain convolution made by the vow and *because they were told they had it.* Please note that last clause.

"ONE of Sigmund's sons was named Hamandr, and he had the wolf-mania and also he had a specially beautiful bronze sword, which he left to his son and heir. From father to son that sword passed for over a thousand years, until the Bronze Age Hamandr's descendant in the Viking Age went buccaneering to England. His name was Magnus, called Fairlocks, and he surnamed himself Hamandr's Son, to boast his descent from a far-off, distinguished ancestor. Iron weapons had long been in use by his date; it is probable the bronze blade was then a sort of sign of headship amongst the descendants of Hamandr. Pretty much as the lordship of the manor of Poynings went with a ruby ring in later times. Anyhow, Magnus Fairlocks was so proud of it that he had new hilt plates put on it, with his name on in runes.

"He came to England, as I said, buccaneering, on a ship with a golden dragon figurehead, married a Saxon lady, and settled down in Sussex. Duly he died, and his longship was dragged ashore and buried with him in it, in a mound on a mount where he had cut a turf and chalk image of the Danes' favourite god, Vingi Thor. His heirloom sword was broken and buried with him because, I gather, he remained a pagan while his children turned Christian, like their Saxon mother. And on top of the mound they erected a memorial stone with his name and descent on it in runes. In later times this tomb was regarded as an accursed Druid relic, thrown down, and buried. Just as the Hove Goldstone was treated a hundred years ago.

"Now the descendants of Magnus—who named themselves 'Hammand' when surnames came in fashion—had the curse of the wolf in them. The origin had been utterly forgotten. Lycanthropy was very common in the Middle Ages, therefore it was not considered so outrageous as in our time. It came to be regarded as a demon who had power to possess the head of the Hammands—"

"One minute," Oliver put in. "Didn't it extend to other branches of Magnus's descendants?"

"No, for we are none of us the sheer victims of heredity. We make our ancestral curses better or worse, because *suggestion is as powerful as heredity.* It was an article of belief that the Undying Monster which represented the medieval idea of the mania could only possess the owner of Dannow, and every successive owner was told that, and *subconsciously expected it to happen.* Unless a Hammand owned Dannow he never expected to be possessed by the Monster; if he owned the place he was always expecting it subconsciously. Also, they knew it could only have power in cold and starlit pinewoods; and with the best intentions they inaugurated a most deplorable practice.

"I mean the ritual. They composed a warning rhyme, describing the conditions, and when each heir came of age he was solemnly conducted to an obscure chamber, taught the rhyme and its meaning, and tested—"

"Tested?" said Oliver.

"There are pines outside the hidden room window. With the shutters open in starlight the conditions are fulfilled. I have proved it. This is the ritual I deduced; the heir was solemnly warned and exposed to starlight in the room. In the circumstances he would be certain to have an attack of lycanthropy. Those in the secret knew how to check it—by showing a light. This would warn the youth to avoid starlit pinewoods—"

"But why didn't my ancestors remove all the pines on the estate?" Oliver asked.

Luna smiled.

"Because they were not cowards. They did their best, and if it failed reckoned it God's will. It would have been unmanly timidity to avoid in their own ground what they were bound to encounter anywhere else; as two of them did on the way to Rocamadour. They did all contemporary science could suggest until God chose to arrange a way in which the mania might have died out, if it had not been for the Warlock's unhallowed studies. I mean the

Anchorite, of course; he sought to deliver his race by sacrificing himself, giving up his family and his worldly prospects for the life of a recluse and prayers and penances by which he sought power to 'lay' the Monster for ever. That he did 'lay' it, compelling it to lie helpless in the Barrow, was firmly believed: *and so the power of the mania was weakened.* Then came the final dispensation of providence; during the War of the Roses everyone who knew the ritual met a sudden end, and Dannow came into the hands of a Hammand who had never been initiated into the secret, and who understood the Monster had been chained for ever in the Barrow.

"THAT was the turning point. For the mental impression that the head of the Hammands was liable to attacks of lycanthropy in certain circumstances, was substituted the conviction that the Monster was chained in the Barrow. In a few generations the cure would have been complete, and the Monster have become a dim memory of something in the past tense.

"Most unfortunately Magnus the Warlock undid the good providence had planned for him, by his occult dabbling. You have heard his version of the opening of the Barrow; I'll elucidate it from the point of exact mental science. He worked by artificial light, with one helper; unluckily he chose cold and starlight nights for the operations. When he reached the figure-head his ancestral memory began to stir—as it did with you, Oliver. At sight of his golden-plaited ancestor's bones and Danish harness it woke violently, and he was in a perfect state of nervous tension when the artificial light failed: extinguished by the gases from the open ship, no doubt. He automatically thought it was the Monster, broken free and triumphing over the Hand of Glory, and the mania came on him. He killed his dog in the cutting, flinging its body out, and sprang out to attack his assistant. Fortunately the lantern was alight, and in its rays the mania ceased.

"He knew what he had done, thinking he was possessed by the Monster, but prudently did not tell Slinfold that. Convinced he had released the Monster he recklessly took the inscribed sword hilt, taking his ancestor's runes for a mystic spell. He kept it safe with the Hand of Glory, and some years later tragedy overtook him. He had sunk low enough to use his own child as assistant in his black magical experiments and during the course of one in the hidden room he must by accident have lit on the fatal combination of starlight, cold and pines. The wolf fit came on him and he destroyed the child.

"Lady Hammand must have come with a light in the middle of the horror, she died of shock, while he came to his senses and realised what he had done. He had nerve enough not to let the public know he had been the Monster's instrument, as he would suppose; but he probably told his father confessor. We know he killed himself, after buying the incredible pardon and making a cryptic remark about the hidden room. This reference I rightly understood to mean he merely attributed the disaster to his forbidden studies in it.

"After that the course of the mania was plain. The Warlock's evil doing had undone the Anchorite's sacrifice, destroyed the idea that the Monster was chained. The Warlock's son killed his own wife; through shame and horror he would not say what had happened, and pined to death. You will be able to explain every case to yourselves now. When the patient came to himself he saw no reason to explain he had been the Monster's instrument, and the truth was never found out; for the reason that the mania only came on with but one other person present, and that person was invariably killed being taken unawares. Only in two cases the patient's own dogs must have killed him when he attacked them."

"Grandfather killed two people," said Swanhild.

"He was meeting a woman secretly, answered Luna drily. "She had met her fate before the blackmailer showed up and met his in turn. So you have the story from the Bronze Age to now."

"Only for my part." Oliver looked up staring straight before him. "I understand it now. Poor Holder gave no warning because the Monster's approach was only my brain waking, the rage I felt was a wolf's hate for a human being and dog. The poor old tyke must have run off until —until I was done with—oh, I can't say it—and attacked him. Only the blow on the head; I don't quite understand that.

"You slipped as you threw the dog's body away. Other Hammands came out of the fit naturally, and knew by their own state what they had done. The blow utterly confused your memory. When Luna broke up the fit by bringing in the mote

lamp this evening you woke naturally and understood, confusedly, what you had done."

"Totally ruining my beautiful bought-and-paid-for arm!" said the irrepressible Goddard. "I *was* in a stew while I didn't know what was keeping you in check, old man! Of course it was the presence of more than one person. I believe we are to learn how you learnt all this, Miss Bartendale?"

"Yes, I must explain my investigation in order that you may all understand the last experiment."

"WHEN Swanhild told me the traditions I saw there was something at the back of them, something nobody suspected," Luna resumed. "The Shaw at once settled all question of a Fourth Dimensional being. I must tell you that in my professional work I have not yet met with a case of ghostly interference that would stand investigation, but I have established that anything outside of the normal Third Dimension is always perceptible to a dog or cat or human Sensitive. It follows the track of the only abnormality in the wood—that of spilt blood where you were carried, Oliver. I had a suspicion already by that time, knowing you had been cut up a good deal in the war and were in a highly-strung state—"

"You seemed to suspect me of this enormity pretty quickly," said Oliver.

She returned in quite her old patronising way: "Such things are not so uncommon as the laity suppose! I warned you of the Fifth Dimension, but shelved the idea for my subconscious mind to ruminate on while we tried the church. There I looked at the Monster's alleged portraits and found no enlightenment at first. The Pardon gave me my first starting point. A man who was bold enough to practise forbidden arts in Tudor days must have committed some abnormal sin, for the bought absolution was of the most gigantic proportions. For the time I wondered if the Monster really started with him, and tradition had fathered it on his forebears.

"As we left the church another glance at the brass brought illumination. The body of the brass 'Monster' is roughly human, while the head might be anything from a dog's to a dragon's, and the paws are short-toed dog paws. The Monster always tore with grappling, handlike paws; this could not be a literal representation of it, it must be allegorical. A human body; hands and head; the seats of impulse and action; animal. Human body and animal thoughts and acts—I saw the meaning of the rhyme at once:

'Hammand Monster, do ye wit,
With the race is firmly knit.'

"It explained all; in the Anchorite's day it was known it was something *inherent in the race* which woke and possessed the victim. The dog's not giving any warning was finally explained.

"Remember I have peculiar knowledge, and cases of people who have apparently been possessed by animal spirits are not unusual in my experience. 'Lycanthropy' was what I said to myself as I left the church. Only the hereditary character is unique—in the modern West at least—and that feature engaged my attention at once. Of the origin of wolf-mania nothing is known; with the earliest records it is already an established form of madness. Yet it must have had an origin.

"A man can go insane through shock or physical accident, but he doesn't imagine he is a particular animal without some mental prompting, and some crime against nature is at the root of all abnormal heredity mania. Crime committed by a single person sometimes extends its punishment to the guiltless through long ages. Might it be possible to find the origin through your hereditary memory?

"You see, even at that early stage the hope of doing away with the Bane had come to me. I had learnt it was a creation of the Fifth Dimension, an impression of the brain that obsessed the brain's owner in specific conditions. Like cures like; if I could find the exact origin might I not be able to banish it by a counter-impression? So I kept my own counsel; the matter was so long-established that only the exact truth of its origin would serve, and I had to keep you in ignorance, Oliver, lest you should unconsciously start to invent particulars. I had to test your recollection by association alone, and see what light archaeology and the family history would shed on what I elicited.

"At that stage all was a chaos of disconnected data, but the hidden room at once afforded something to start from, in the shape of the Scandinavian sword. I had noticed that the family features, like the family name, pointed to a Danish origin; the north was the home of wehrwolves, and the Danish sword and the

runes on it might prove the clue to the Monster's origin. The connection with the hand I did not then understand, beyond its proving the nature of the Warlock's work. It will be obvious now how I deduced the ritual, and that it was extinct before the Warlock's time. This extinction was explained by the pedigree, also how providence had enabled him to start life with the entail of the curse broken, and that in some way he must have ruined this advantage through his occult studies.

"WHILE my learned friends wrestled with the runes I tested your memory in the way you know. When the Danish sword suggested golden pigtails and the fylfot I wondered if the Warlock had taken it from some Danish grave, in which case the use of the hand was evident. I had already surmised the Monstrous Man was a Danish creation, as was the corrupt name 'Thunder's Barrow.' The legend of the hidden gold was another step, and my friend's reading the name of your ancestor clinched matters. Then your persistence about the inscription on the bronze blade made me certain that inscription contained the secret: since memory of it had survived when the ritual was forgotten.

"I was right and wrong in the Barrow matter. Right as to the Warlock's digging, wrong at to his motive; as I realised when the gold-plated figurehead appeared. The excavation was an apparent failure, but it was not utterly so, for in the course of it I learnt how strong your dormant memory of old Danish matters is, Oliver, and that encouraged me to persevere.

"I decided to try a serious experiment. You remember that night I hypnotised you in the drawing-room? And that when you were waked two hours later we simply told you we had elicited nothing fresh? Well, during those two hours Swanhild and I took you into the hidden room, bringing you back before you waked—"

"By jove!" exclaimed Goddard. "Pardon the interruption. I'll tell you about it later, Oliver."

"I had told Swanhild the truth as soon as you were asleep. She could not believe it without evidence; therefore, leaving Auntie in the drawing-room for fear a servant might come on some errand and be puzzled by our disappearance, we took you to the room. There I made you stand inside a chalked pentacle, impressing on you that you could not move outside it, placed the hand, sword, and golden plates in your view, turned the light low and hid it, and made you believe you were alone with Swanhild in the starlit night with pines near. The effect was overwhelming, the wehrwolf fit coming on at once. You were unable to get out of the pentacle, however; which told me the strong power of suggestion I had acquired. While you were in that state I summoned Hamandr your ancestor to appear, calling him by his proper designation of *Skinturner,* and hoping to get further information from you; but you were incapable of coherent human speech—to all intents you were a mere animal for the time.

"It grew too painful for Swanhild to bear, so I conducted you back to the drawing-room, leaving her to recover a little—oh, I'll tell you that in detail later. Next day Slinfold's narrative turned up, we secured the inscribed stone, and it proved to be the final clue. On Thursday my professor read the runic inscription on it, and this is how it runs—"

She unfolded a paper, Oliver held it to the light and read: *"Edith his wife, and Olafr, Rognwaldr, and Swanhild his children, raised this memorial to Magnus, that was named Fairlocks, that was of the blood of Hamandr Sigmund's Son the Volsung."*

"It was quite enough," Luna resumed. "It linked you with the Volsung tale, as told in the Elder Edda. Now pray attend carefully, that you may understand my weak link. On getting the translation I applied to the British Museum, and had a summary of the Volsung tale prepared from different versions of the Edda. One point eluded me; there must have been some exact connection between the fight with the wolf and the lycanthropy, but that connection was not apparent. The mere fight with the wolf was not enough to induce the abiding mania.

At last my Museum assistant, at his wits' end, was reduced to consulting poetry. He produced William Morris's metrical version of the Volsung epic. And in it is Sigmund's vow; which was not introduced in any of the prose translations at my command. This vow idea offers such a convincing and logical reason for the mania that I related it to you in its proper place. Still, it is the weak link; an explanation is not necessarily the true one simply because it is plausible. On the other hand a true poet can so enter into the thoughts of others, even of the dead, that he can often explain a

motive of which no tangible record is available.

"That is the history of the Undying Monster. Its cause, blasphemy when men believed with heart and soul and *brain*. Its agency, a kink in the brain and the unfortunate heirs of that kink. Its effects past summing, ramifying from homicidal mania (to put it scientifically) to a crop of disgraceful legends. Now I shall lay before you the feeble hope I have of ending the history; for the Monster may be undying in itself, but liable to be killed if my weak link holds."

Oliver raised his head and looked full at her as she went on: "I came down to-day with the intention of making the experiment; I have only had to hurry owing to these arrests. What I intend is to make the wolf-mania work itself out."

"The mania work itself out? How?"

"By working backward through your memory right to the Bronze Age, until I persuade you you are your own ancestor, Sigmund the Volsung. There was much method in my putting you through your paces at our different sittings! Your memory of ancient Danish religion is very powerful—as I proved apropos of the Last Warring two days ago—I shall wake all recollections connected with Sigmund, then carry it further by suggesting that you—as Sigmund—die, that the Final Warring comes, that the wolf-mania has worked itself out, in accordance with the terms of the vow, and that Sigmund has been forgiven by the gods, and taken into the company of the gods and the risen dead at the re-creation of the world. In this way the convolution of the brain that harboured the wolf-mania will be altered and henceforth only hold a vague, complacent sense of something done with. Do you understand?"

"I do now. If it succeeds—"

"Oh, do not hope!" she begged. "The weak link—no more than the idea of a poet three thousand years after your ancestor's time—is so very doubtful! But we will try. I shall rouse the wolf-mania in the hidden room, put you in hypnosis, and do as I have described. After that we shall repeat the conditions for rousing the mania. If it does not wake, then you are a normal man for ever; but if it wakes the vow idea is wrong and—the problem of the future is for you to settle."

AT SEVEN o'clock Luna and Oliver were at the end of a short conversation alone in the Holbein room. "It's time," said Luna. "You quite understand, Oliver? You must not hope, for fear of the—the—"

She hesitated, her eyes seeking his miserably. "For fear of the disappointment if the link fails?" he completed.

"If it fails. But I must hope, for if the link does not fail the whole may yet fail if I do not do my work well. And one cannot work convincingly without hope. It rests on the link—and on me equally."

She stepped close to him and held out her hands. He bent his head, but again ingrained discipline asserted itself and his kiss merely touched her forehead.

Two cool and steady young people accompanied Madame Yorke to the disused complex. The piano stood by the open door over the water; in the hidden room Swanhild and Goddard were adjusting the last big pine bough beside the open shutters. All the party wore their thickest coats, for it was very cold in the stone room with the wind pouring through the window. Madame Yorke remained at the piano, able to hear but not to see what went on in the room. The four young people were very quiet. Three pairs of eyes followed Luna's every movement.

The Warlock's table was at the foot of the stairs, the free space beyond it was still filled by the chalked pentacle, now somewhat blurred. Between the chalked line and the window were heaped the gold plates of the figurehead, the hand and bronze sword lay on the table beside a lamp that could be shrouded in an impromptu screen. Luna nodded to Oliver.

He stepped into the pentacle where a chair waited. She took a stick of chalk and re-marked the lines. "Remember, you cannot step beyond these lines," she told him, her eyes holding his. "Look—pines and stars to be seen outside the window, and cold wind, and"—she gave a gesture and the other two ran up to the niche—"and only one person with you; *garoul Hammand!*"

She slid the screen round the lamp. The room was black to Goddard and Swanhild, as they peered down the stairs, and quite still for a minute. Luna stood with teeth clenched and palms damp; her eyes became adjusted to the dark and as she discerned a star or two through the grille, two red sparks lit at the top of the vague black bulk that was Oliver in his chair. The demoniac barking howl that Goddard and Swanhild had heard before broke out. In the corridor Madame Yorke clutched her ears, simultaneously Luna swept the

screen aside and the room was lit again. The howl stopped half-way.

THE two in the niche returned to their posts at the table. Oliver stood, shaking convulsively, in the pentacle, his face just losing the appearance it had worn in the Shaw. Before he could speak Luna flicked a hand commandingly towards him, "Sit, and sleep!" she ordered.

He sat down, his lids drooping. She closed the shutters.

Then she seemed to wake to life. Her voice took on a fervid cadence that seemed to fill the whole room with a thin, hushed mass of sound. "Sigmund Volsungsson—vower of the wolf vow, I speak to you!" she began.

"I hear, who am Sigmund the king, son of Volsung the king and the vower of the wolf vow," he answered tonelessly.

"Sigmund, you are dying on the strand of a strange country," she went on. "Dying after a battle wherein Odin's self came to slay thee."

"The old man in cloud-grey raiment, who smote me down with a strained twibill, was truly Odin himself," he quietly assented. He sat rigidly at attention, his eyes following her every movement.

"Do you know who it is that bends over you as you die, Sigmund?" she asked. "It is your queen."

He turned his head to the right, but his eyes remained directed at her. "My queen—Hiordis!" he said, and staggered to his feet and stood swaying. "Let me die standing as a Volsung should, Hiordis," he cried in a voice gone suddenly feeble.

"Alas, now is the life gone from you, Sigmund," exclaimed Luna. Immediately he collapsed into the chair, but ere he well fell back her voice changed and clanged out ringingly. "Sigmund, awake!" she called. "Hear the call to Godhome, Volsung soul!—arise and come away!"

"I come, Chooser of the Slain!"

He sat up as though galvanised. *"Die Walküre!"* she called, turning her head to the stairs; and from the corridor, made mystically impersonal from the invisibility of its source, the "Ride of the Valkyrs" swelled through the room. Through what followed it made a background of swooping, galloping melody, with the gurgle of the spring running behind it, through which Luna's voice pierced, thin and clear, in a steady thread of recitative.

"Mount and come, Sigmund! Mount and ride with the Valkyrs; the Choosers of the Heroic Slain! Hear the clatter of our horsehooves on the stars as we gallop through the sky! See, Volsung's son, the stormclouds fleeting past us like wisps of mist; see the world wax small and ever smaller beneath us—"

The blankness of Oliver's face was gone. It was flushed, his eyes flamed red. His hands were held in a way that suggested the grip of an imaginary bridle, at her warning his knees crooked and stiffened as though calves and thighs gripped a horse's sides.

"Onward—ever onward!" she proceeded. "The earth is past; the stars are past; the firmament's very rim has felt the last touch of our horsehooves! Winter and summer are outraced—we reach Valhalla, Sigmund Volsung's son! Enter Godhome, son of Volsung, enter and rest and feast until the Day of Odin's Need. You are in Valhalla, Sigmund, feasting, wrestling, fencing, with your peers the Einheirar, everliving through the short years of unwearying days. The centuries are sweeping past on midearth, Volsung Sigmund; long wars there are, and short times of peace, but they pass unnoticed in Valhalla, in the fair companionship of the Einheirar. With the leaves of Yggdrasil, the Holy Ash, ever soughing overheard, and Odin's self in the shade of it. The peace of Valhalla—and now wake, Volsung's son, for the ages have passed like a night's dream, and it is the Fimbulvetertide! The Day of Odin's Need—of the Need of the Asa gods—son of Volsung!"

HER voice had risen gradually. It dropped now to a thin thread. The music ceased, and the pianist began an improvisation of her own in a minor key that barely seconded the gurgle of the spring and formed a flat, nebulous background to the flexible voice.

"Look down and abroad from Valhalla's golden wall, Sigmund," it exhorted. "Look as the Asa gods and your fellows the Einheirar look, to earth in the Fimbulvetertide. The fated three winters of war are overpast, the torn and tangled nations would fain be at truce to till the ground fattened with three years of shed blood but the judgment of the Norns is upon them. They have spun and carded, and sheared; the Norns of Past and Present and Yet to Be; and the latter days of Fimbulveter-tide follow the first.

It is the time of Regnarok; the sun and the moon are darkened; the stars vanish in the shrivelling arch of Ymer's Skull—It is THE DAY!

"The Day—the Day of Regnarok, Sigmund son of Volsung! The earth is quaking—Valhalla's self trembles—" Her voice had become a steady, toneless chant. Oliver sat upright, quivering in every limb. "The earth trembles, Volsung's son—look, how Fenrir Lokisson, Fenrir the Wolf, has burst his bonds and races over the shrinking land. Yes, and behold how Jormundgandr the serpent no longer reposes, tail in mouth, to hold the waters steady around the world, but strives to climb aland and lashes the troubled waters, wave on wave, so that they overwhelm the shore! See the waves writhing upwards even to the shrivelling sky, son of Volsung; and see what creeps forward on the lashed welter of them! Nagelfare it is, son of Volsung; ship Nagelfare, builded through the ages of dead men's nails, and launched now and sailing with a crew of hell's legions to the wreck of Godhome!

"Look, too, to West. Look to the blazing mountain of Muspellheim—to the flaming mount where bide Surtur and the Sons of the Flame! It is Regnarok Day, son of Volsung, and they arise—they saddle their flaming horses—behind Surtur their lord they ride through the splitting heavens to the wrecking of Midearth and Valhalla!

"See, too, how hell's own jaws open, and Hela its ruler and Asa Lok emerge and range beside the flaming chargers. From Muspellheim they advance, and the flames and gledes of it follow them like hounds of fire.

"And wake now, Volsung's son: for Heimdall has climbed the highest height of Valhalla and—hear it now!—he has sounded the Gjaller horn! The Asa gods and Einheirar rouse them. Hear how it drowns the very blast of the Gjaller horn—the clanguor as the Asa and Einheirar fling on helm and cuirass and snatch their weapons—and hear the sound of the peace strings snapping—"

Oliver sprang to his feet. His face was transfigured, shining with a radiance from within as he towered before her, staring right over her head at some imaginary sight, chin up, eyes flaming and flickering under tauntened brows. *"Heysa-a-a!"* a long, snarling call rippled from his throat. "A Volsung! A Volsung!"

She made a little gesture to the chair he had left. "Cuirass, and belt, sword, and helm, and shield," she said.

He went through a rapid pantomime. Taking an invisible object from the chair he went through the movements of dragging it on over one arm and his head, pulling it down round waist and hips, and buckling it down the side, his hands moving with feverish haste. Round his waist an invisible belt went, then a helmet on his head, with some adjustment of it over the ears. Something was lifted with reverence from the chair and slung to the belt, something else slung on the left arm and hitched over the shoulder. It was intelligible enough. As he shifted the imaginary shield into place Luna spoke again: *"Die Walküre* once more!" she called up the stairs, and again the tremendous music surged forth and filled the room.

Very coolly and gently her voice took up the thread of recitative. "The Choosers of the Slain and now the Leaders of the Slain to the Unshapen Isle and the Last Warring of the Gods and the Sons of the Flame. Look how the hordes of Muspellheim reach Bifrost—Bifrost Bridge which mortals name the rainbow! See them crowd it, rank on rank, and the flames and gledes behind them. See, see—Bifrost bends—Bifrost breaks beneath them! It comes apart; see its splinters falling to the foamy sea below, where rides Nagelfare—opalescent splinters mixed with the gledes and sparks of the flame!

"See, Surtur and his legions are in the wallowing flood. Their steeds strike out. But the gods are on the strand of Valhalla—their snowy chargers breast the waves as do the flaming steeds of hell—the Einheirar are streaming down from the gates of Valhalla—*Volsung Sigmund—Vower of the Wolf Vow, why do you alone delay?"*

A look of the most blank and abject horror came to Oliver's face. The clear battle-light in his eyes altered to an unfocussed glare of dismay. He stopped in the first movement of a rush forward, and hung awkwardly on one foot.

"Vower of the vow—you who swore to be a wolf on THE DAY!" she said quietly.

He stayed as he was, glaring before him.

"Sigmund, you cannot join the Einheirar," she went on. "You restrain yourself with difficulty—you know, who vowed the wolf vow, that no beast nor bestial man can smite upon the side of the gods in THAT DAY. If you join the strife your place will be with Wolf Fenrir and the horde of Surtur; and you will tear the throat of Odin's self even as you blasphemed him in your despair! The vow is coming to its fulfilment, son of Volsung!"

As she spoke the word Oliver went on all fours within the pentacle. The inhuman wehrwolf call crackled and roared out, and

so he crouched, propped on his palms and writhing in every muscle.

"THE Einheirar ride, and you may not ride with them, Sigmund son of Volsung!" Luna went on.

"See, they pass by, your father Volsung the king and your brothers with him; there your forefathers; there the Niblung brethren; dark in the blue Niblung mail. There ride your sons, Helgi and Hamandr. There Sinfjotli Signysson who was a wolf with you in your life. There, all golden in dwarf-wrought helm and harness, is Sigurd Fafnir's Bane. Your sons, Sigmund of the wolf vow: for the sin of your lips you must stand aside on THE DAY, yet, by Odin's dear grace, your flesh is battling by the side of the Asa gods in this tide whereto all Time has led.

"There ride the kings of the North, of Denmark and Norway and Sweden. There Olaf Tryggvesson, for all he brought the White Christ to northern lands, and with him Elinar Tamberskilver, and Kolbiorn, and even Hakon, too, of Lade. There is Canute, lord of all the North; there Sigurd Jorsalafarer, there—stream on stream of them, the Byzantine incense-fumes still in their helmet-plumes—come the Varangers! There they come, one and all, the heroes of the North. Only you; Sigmund of the wolf vow, must stand aside on THE DAY!"

Oliver was alternately straining against the pentacle's line, and rolling on one side and the other, like a rabid dog; writhing all the time, barking, snarling, and panting loudly between the paroxysms. The chant picked up speed.

"They ride the sea; look, Sigmund, you who must stand inactive on THE DAY! Asa gods and Einheirar, ghost-crew of Nagelfare, horde of Hela's realm and Sons of the Flame—they ride the sea! See Odin lay about him with his twi-bill, see Thor's Hammer rise and fall and rise bloodied, see the Einheirar smite! It is vain"; she lowered her voice still further and the music died off until she was speaking, with increasing hushedness, to the mere accompaniment of the gurgling water and the sough of wind between the grilles: "Wolf Fenrir seizes the throat of Odin—Where is the Allfather? Dead—Allfather Odin is dead; and, for the sin of his mind and lips, Sigmund could deal no blow in his defence! Look—look! Asagod Tyr is down, Garmer the Dog has him—the Sons of Flame win—they win! The Asa gods are slain, the Einheirar drop one by one—Surtar is calling to Muspellheim! He orders—the Mountain of the Flame answers; it pours its fires, stream on stream, over the earth.

"The sea vanishes in a spurt of steam. The streams of fire rush, splashing wave on wave, they overwhelm dead gods and dead Einheirar—they beat against the golden walls of Valhalla's self, as waves beat the seaside rocks; the wall of Valhalla melts, the flame-waves overflow Valhalla, the earth reels, the sky shrivels, the sun and moon alike drop into the sea of rocking flame. Only Yggdrasil the Ash, stands, quivering, amidst the wrack. The gods are dead!"

Then *"Die Götterdämerung!"* she called, and the sombre cadence of the funeral march of the gods rolled forth. In the pentacle Oliver cowered, half-exhausted and foaming at the mouth. Luna's voice sank even lower as she proceeded.

"All are dead, Asa gods, Earth, and Valhalla, and Time. Only Sigmund son of Volsung lives on in an unliving life; he who for his tongue's sin stood aside on THE DAY. He who did penance for his sin by standing aside on THE DAY. Look upon creation, Volsung Sigmund—a fire-scorched Nothing it lies in your sight, only Ash Yggdrasil stands firm over the wreck. Earth is but an icy-cold wilderness now that the sun is dead. The Sons of the Flame, they who won, died as all powers of evil must die in time. The ages pass, age after age—unreckoned in this eternity after the death of Time. Muspellheim's fires die, the ice of the Gaping Gap, whence came the universe, crawls over their slaked ashes. Only Yggdrasil stands in a dead creation.

"But Volsung, look!" Her voice rose with electrifying sharpness, and the music ceased. "What is happening to the Tree, and what is toward on the earth? The ice is warming, turning to rivers, as a new sun glides up into the new forming firmament. They cut themselves channels in the earth's surface—they run—greenness is creeping over the dead world—trees are budding from the clefts of the barren rocks. It is spring; Time is born again!"

OLIVER cowered in a quivering heap, his scarlet beast's eyes fixed on her. "Look!" she cried. "Who ride forth on the new-born earth? Whence did they come? Horses trampling joyously, harness chiming, voices calling—friend greeting friend. The Einheirar are risen! Who rides at their head? Odin arisen! Who rides

amidst them?—the Asa gods arisen! Odin, and Thor, and Tyr, and Baldur—the gods are risen!"

She rapped an order aside to the stairway, and the commanding clamour of "The Song of Awakening" rang out. Penetratingly clear her voice chimed in with it: "Odin calls—Odin calls his chosen heroes by name to the glory of the new heaven and earth! Rise, rise, Volsung Sigmund, for the first name Odin calls is the name of him who vowed the wolf vow and expiated it by his self-made agony of remaining aloof on THE DAY! Rise, forgiven, Sigmund; wolf vow worked out and atoned; rise and join the Asa gods and Einheirar in the newborn Valhalla for ever!"

Oliver was on his feet in the pentacle, almost on tiptoes with the gush of alert energy that had straightened him upright, chest out, chin up, hands raised in what Swanhild somehow knew was the root-attitude of worship in all humanity. His face was the wolf face, only the eyes were not red. They were human eyes, Oliver Hammand's normal eyes set in the wolf mask, and no sooner had his sister realised that than the wolf features changed. They did not fade gradually, as in the Shaw, into his natural features; rather they vanished between two flicks of the watcher's eyelids, and Oliver was there in his pleasant human entirety. Only he seemed bigger and more splendid than he had ever been before, and his eyes blazed with a steady, ecstatic scintillation, as though they reflected the light from a world beyond ours.

"Worked out—and forgiven—I thank you, Odin Allfather!" he cried. "Forgiven for ever—wolf nevermore!"

Luna, before him, seemed almost tiny and insignificant by contrast with his radiant, magnificent manhood. She trembled and shrank back, then pulled herself together. "Wake, *Oliver Hammand!*" she ordered.

He shut his eyes a moment, gave a little sigh, and opened them. "Why—what—" he began, looking round confusedly. "You were going to hypnotise me, weren't you?"

"In a minute," Luna snapped. "Up the stairs!" she called to Goddard and Swanhild. They obeyed without a word. It was the final minute. "I want to try you again, with pines and starlight, and only myself present," she said to Oliver. Then she swung the shutters open and shrouded the lamp.

"The stars are very clear," said Oliver quietly, at last. "I don't quite understand."

"Pines, stars, cold, and one companion—*Garoul Hammand!*" Luna said.

"Good Lord, I remember!" he cried sharply. "You told me I go mad, turn to a wolf in such conditions—didn't you make me do it just now? I—I'm all confused. Only it really doesn't affect me at all—makes me feel rather pleasant, it's all so fresh, and nice-smelling, and quiet. Luna—does it mean you were mistaken about it? But I remember—the Shaw! A feel all confused—am I crazy?"

"Not crazy—cured!" She flashed the light on again and confronted him, her eyes almost wild, her breast heaving as she half-sobbed: "Not crazy—cured! You are a normal man for the first time."

SWANHILD and Goddard came down into the room and after them Madame Yorke. Oliver hid his face in his hands for a minute. Then he raised it again and squared his shoulders.

"I'm rather confused, you know," he said at last. "You've all had more or less time to understand the business; I've only had to-night. But two things I do comprehend—that I'm normal, and that I must ring up the police at once. And, somehow, I don't feel either sorry or glad, afraid or hopeful. It's all been so sudden, and the idea that I was to lose you, Luna, had not time to get a grip of me before you found that the link held. That it held," he repeated, "that God has allowed you to give me hope of a future in spite of disgrace."

They both forgot the others as they climbed the stairs without further words, their arms linked for the first time.

Outside the gallery door Walton hovered.

"Inspector Burrell, sir. Just rang you up."

Luna's hands twitched on Oliver's arm. He smiled down reassuringly into the agony of her eyes. "Very good, Walton. Tell the Inspector I expected the call and will have a few words with him immediately."

Walton hurried away. "It's as well it has come at once, both for the two fellows and our own sakes," said Oliver quietly. "Swanhild, you'll drive round to the Ades. Goddard, you'll come with me. No, Luna, dear, I'd rather you went into the Holbein room."

She obeyed without protest. Swanhild ran upstairs glad of something active to do. Within a few minutes she would be helping to bring the family name down in eternal ruin. What would they do to Oliver? Put him somewhere as a dangerous maniac? And poor Luna—poor Luna who

had risked all to save him. In her room two photographs caught her eye; she found herself thanking God silently her father and mother were dead.

When she reached the door of the Holbein room the men were still at the telephone, across the dusky hall. Oliver dropped the receiver and stared at Goddard.

Luna turned from the fire to face them. Her lips worked and her eyebrows almost met with agony, but she smiled at Oliver. "You have told him, dear?" she asked.

He crossed the room and bunched her hands in his. "I haven't—oh, thank God, Luna! Thank God!" was all he could reply.

Goddard shut the door. "Let me tell!" he cried. "It's bathos—and bathos suits me. It's not the Shaw—that's absolutely out. Those two men took a bit of brimstone, or sulphur, or something, into old Hudson's preserves last night. Six brace of pheasants—sold to a Steyning poulterer. They were drunk when the boys in blue came for them, and waxed disorderly. The village flocked to the show while we gambolled undisturbed with the spiritualists; hence exaggerated accounts of the cause of arrest. The family name's saved, all is saved, and the Monster's laid for ever!"

Luna's eyes sought Oliver's. "All saved!" he said. "Only—oh, Luna, the poor girl!"

When Goddard took his departure Swanhild walked with him as far as the moat bridge, and they leant on the parapet a little while. The night world was cold and illimitable under its roofing of translucent black sky and quivering stars. The dark water rippled gently, the wind stirred a million little voices in the ivy round the house.

"Night is the only really peaceful thing in life," Swanhild whispered. "And, though it is not two weeks since—since the Shaw, I feel as though I'd never felt the peace of it before. First the idea of the Monster as a spirit lurking in clear darkness—then the worse horror of the truth! Oh, I never seem to have seen the stars without a cloud near them before."

THE inquest came to an end with the second adjournment. The police had to admit they were unable to solve the puzzle of the Shaw, and Kate Stringer's fate was added to the list of Dannow's unsolved mysteries. It seemed that the Ades had never been seriously considered by the official investigators, in spite of Warren's frantic efforts to fix the guilt on them.

"I have given up the Dannow Mystery in despair, and have consequently abandoned my profession in chagrin. At least that's what all the enemies and dear friends I own are saying. They don't know I started the tale myself."

So Luna spoke as she sat with Oliver in the little Chelsea drawing-room a fortnight after the finale in the hidden room. "It tickles my North Country sense of humor to end my career with a failure engineered by myself," she added.

"On the other hand it's held in the Dannow district that you laid the Monster in the Red Sea, on the strength of the servants' tales of our preparations for the last sitting in the room," said Oliver. "Well, laid it is. Ten times since, on frosty, starlit nights, I have been through the Shaw or in the room alone with Swanhild or Goddard."

"Laid it is," she assented. "And it will remain a mystery to the outer world."

"Thanks to what you did over poor Holder, dear."

"Under Providence. Providence and I can do wonders when we give our minds seriously to a problem."

She tried to laugh. "Even at that time—the first day—you made up your mind to involve yourself in the family crash," he went on.

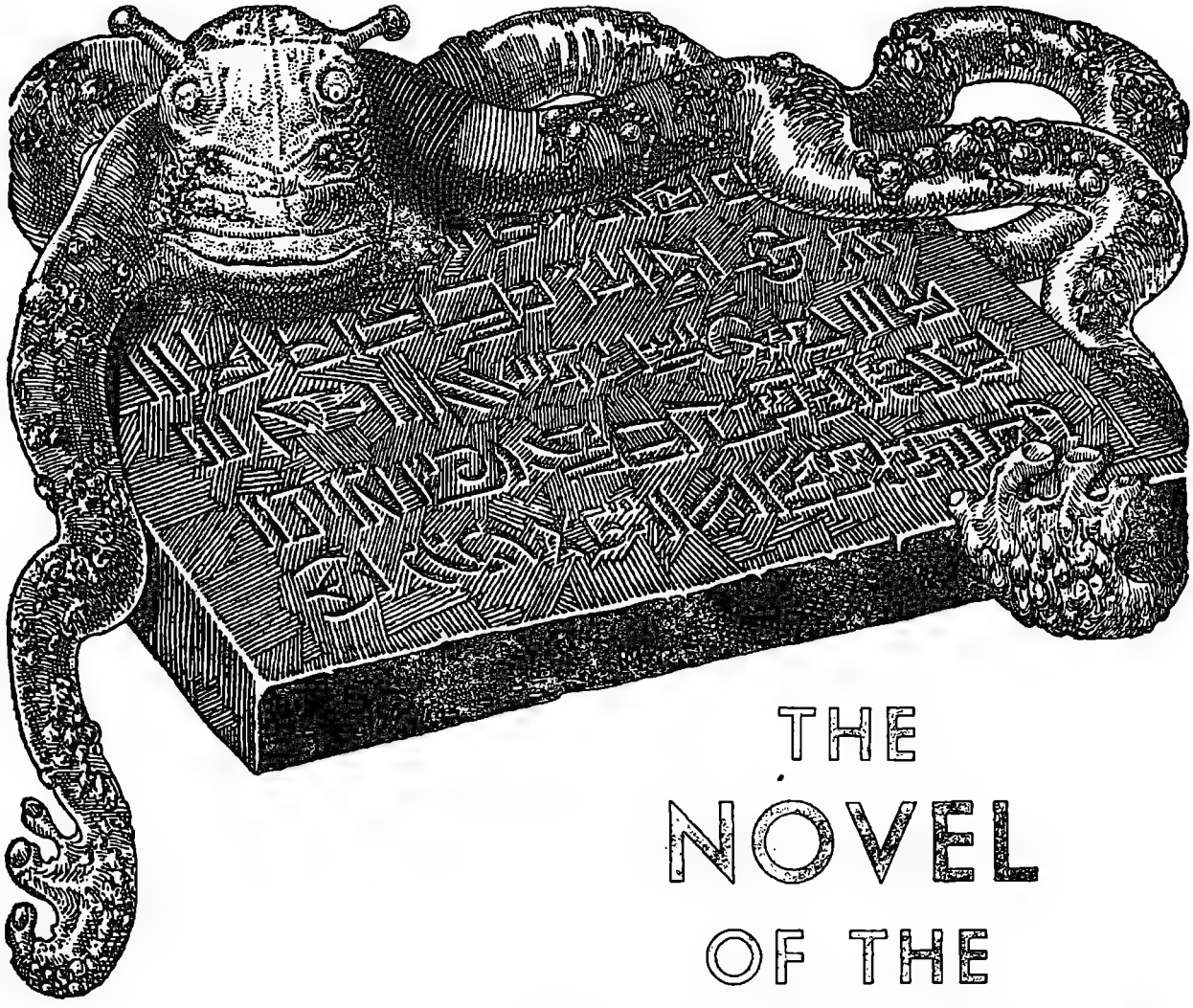
"It was impulse, when I worked over the dog. We didn't know an inquest would be necessary, and I felt it was worth the risk of holding back evidence for the sake of an innocent family. I only destroyed the evidence after our drive to Hassocks. It was then I felt the virtue go out of me—in the car—and decided to lie and run risks, sink or swim, for you, Oliver."

"But what virtue, dear?"

"My Sixth Sensitiveness. That sense clung to me long enough to find the hand, but when next I was in the room I felt no discomfort over handling the thing—as Goddard noticed. That's all: I am no longer a trained Supersensitive, but a perfectly ordinary person."

"And I, thanks to you, am also an ordinary person. We can start life afresh, and together, unburdened by the past—" Oliver stopped. "Oh Luna—poor Kate!" he cried. "I dream of her—I don't seem to have realised till now the incredible horror of what I did—"

"Oliver, dear," she interrupted gravely. "You know what I risked for the right to start life with you. Don't make it too hard for me to make that start hopefully and cheerfully."



THE NOVEL OF THE BLACK SEAL

by Arthur Machen

Unspeakable are the punishments wreaked by the denizens of the netherworld upon those who dare to venture into their secret haunts. . . .

I MUST now give you some certain particulars of my history. I am the daughter of a civil engineer, Steven Lally by name, who was so unfortunate as to die suddenly at the outset of his career, and before he had accumulated sufficient means to support his wife and her two children.

My mother contrived to keep the small household going on resources which must have been incredibly small; we lived in a remote country village, because most of the necessaries of life were cheaper than in a town, but even so we were brought up with the severest economy. My father was a clever and well-read man, and left behind him a small but select collection of books, containing the best Greek, Latin, and English classics, and these books were the only amusement we possessed. My

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brother, I remember, learnt Latin out of Descartes' *Meditatione*, and I, in place of the little tales which children are usually told to read, had nothing more charming than a translation of the *Gesta Romanorum*. We grew up thus, quiet and studious children, and in course of time my brother provided for himself elsewhere.

I continued to live at home because my poor mother had become an invalid, and demanded my continual care, and about two years ago she died after many months of painful illness.

My situation was a terrible one; the shabby furniture barely sufficed to pay the debts I had been forced to contract, and the books I dispatched to my brother, knowing how he would value them. I was absolutely alone; I was aware how poorly my brother was paid; and though I came up to London in the hope of finding employment, with the understanding that he would defray my expenses, I swore it should only be for a month, and that if I could not in that time find some work, I would starve rather than deprive him of the few miserable pounds he had laid by for his day of trouble.

I took a little room in a distant suburb, the cheapest that I could find; I lived on bread and tea, and I spent my time in vain answering of advertisements, and vainer walks to addresses I had noted. Day followed on day, and week on week, and still I was unsuccessful, till at last the term I had appointed drew to a close, and I saw before me the grim prospect of slowly dying of starvation.

My landlady was good-natured in her way; she knew the slenderness of my means, and I am sure that she would not have turned me out of doors; it remained for me then to go away, and to try to die in some quiet place. It was winter then and a thick white fog gathered in the early part of the afternoon, becoming more dense as the day wore on; it was a Sunday, I remember, and the people of the house were at chapel. At about three o'clock I crept out and walked away as quickly as I could, for I was weak from abstinence. The white mist wrapped all the streets in silence, a hard frost had gathered thick upon the bare branches of the trees, and frost crystals glittered on the wooden fences, and on the cold, cruel ground beneath my feet. I walked on, turning to right and left in utter haphazard, without caring to look up at the names of the streets, and all that I remember of my walk on that Sunday afternoon seems but the broken fragments of an evil dream.

In a confused vision I stumbled on, through roads half town and half country. Now and then I would hear a quick step ringing on the iron road, and men would pass me well wrapped up, walking fast for the sake of warmth, and no doubt eagerly foretasting the pleasures of a glowing hearth, with curtains tightly drawn about the frosted panes, and the welcomes of their friends; but as the early evening darkened and night approached, foot-passengers got fewer and fewer, and I passed through street after street alone. In the white silence I stumbled on, as desolate as if I trod the streets of a buried city; and as I grew more weak and exhausted, something of the horror of death was folding thickly round my heart. Suddenly, as I turned a corner, some one accosted me courteously beneath the lamp-post, and I heard a voice asking if I could kindly point the way to Avon Road. At the sudden shock of human accents I was prostrated, and my strength gave way; I fell all huddled on the sidewalk, and wept and sobbed and laughed in violent hysteria.

In a few minutes I was able to compose my feelings, and as I rose I saw that I was confronted by a middle-aged gentleman of pleasing appearance, neatly and correctly dressed.

"My dear madam," he said, "you seem in some terrible distress. You cannot think how you alarmed me. But may I inquire the nature of your trouble? I assure you that you can safely confide in me."

"You are very kind," I replied, "but I fear there is nothing to be done. My condition seems a hopeless one."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense! You are too young to talk like that. Come, let us walk down here, and you must tell me your difficulty. Perhaps I may be able to help you."

THERE was something very soothing and persuasive in his manner, and as we walked together I gave him an outline of my story, and told of the despair that had oppressed me almost to death.

"You were wrong to give in so completely," he said, when I was silent. "A month is too short a time in which to feel one's way in London. London, let me tell you, Miss Lally, does not lie open and undefended; it is a fortified place, fossed and double-moated with curious intricacies. As must always happen in large towns, the conditions of life have become hugely artificial; no mere simple palisade is run up to oppose the man or woman who

would take the place by storm, but serried lines of subtle contrivances, mines, and pitfalls which it needs a strange skill to overcome. You, in your simplicity, fancied you had only to shout for these walls to sink into nothingness, but the time is gone for such startling victories as these. Take courage; you will learn the secret of success before long."

"Alas, sir," I replied, "I have no doubt your conclusions are correct, but at the present moment I seem to be in a fair way to die of starvation. You spoke of a secret; for heaven's sake tell it me, if you have any pity for my distress."

He laughed genially. "There lies the strangeness of it all. Those who know the secret cannot tell it if they would; it is positively as ineffable as the central doctrine of Freemasonry. But I may say this, that you yourself have penetrated at least the outer husk of the mystery," and he laughed again.

"Pray do not jest with me," I said. "What have I done, *que sçais-je?* I am so far ignorant that I have not the slightest idea of how my next meal is to be provided."

"Excuse me. You ask what you have done. You have met me. Come, we will fence no longer. I see you have self-education, the only education which is not infinitely pernicious, and I am in want of a governess for my two children. I have been a widower for some years; my name is Gregg. I offer you the post I have named, and shall we say a salary of a hundred a year?"

I could only stutter out my thanks, and slipping a card with his address, and a banknote by way of earnest into my hand, Mr. Gregg bade me good-bye, asking me to call in a day or two.

Such was my introduction to Professor Gregg, and can you wonder that the remembrance of despair and the cold blast that had blown from the gates of death upon me made me regard him as a second father? Before the close of the week I was installed in my new duties. The professor had leased an old brick manor house in a western suburb of London, and here, surrounded by pleasant lawns and orchards, and soothed with the murmur of ancient elms that rocked their boughs above the road, the new chapter of my life began. Knowing the peculiar nature of a professor's occupations, you will not be surprised to hear that the house teemed with books, and cabinets full of strange, and even hideous, objects filled every available nook in the vast low rooms. Gregg was a man whose one thought was for knowledge, and I too before long caught something of his enthusiasm, and strove to enter into his passion for research. In a few months I was perhaps more his secretary than the governess of the two children, and many a night I have sat at the desk in the glow of the shaded lamp while he, pacing up and down in the rich gloom of the firelight, dictated to me the substance of his "Textbook of Ethnology." But amidst these more sober and accurate studies I always detected a something hidden, a longing and desire for some object to which he did not allude; and now and then he would break short in what he was saying and lapse into reverie, entranced, as it seemed to me, by some distant prospect of adventurous discovery.

The textbook was at last finished, and we began to receive proofs from the printers, which were entrusted to me for a first reading, and then underwent the final revision of the professor. All the while his weariness of the actual business he was engaged on increased, and it was with the joyous laugh of a schoolboy when term is over that he one day handed me a copy of the book. "There," he said, "I have kept my word; I promised to write it, and it is done with. Now I shall be free to live for stranger things; I confess it, Miss Lally, I covet the renown of Columbus; you will, I hope, see me play the part of an explorer."

"Surely," I said, "there is little left to explore. You have been born a few hundred years too late for that."

"I think you are wrong," he replied; "there are still, depend upon it, quaint, and undiscovered countries and continents of strange extent. Ah, Miss Lally! believe me, we stand amidst sacraments and mysteries full of awe, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. Life, believe me, is no simple thing, no mass of grey matter and congeries of veins and muscles to be laid naked by the surgeon's knife; man is the secret which I am about to explore, and before I can discover him I must cross over weltering seas indeed, and oceans and the mists of many thousand years. You know the myth of the lost Atlantis; what if it be true, and I am destined to be called the discoverer of that wonderful land?"

I could see the excitement boiling beneath his words, and in his face was the heart of the hunter; before me stood a man who believed himself summoned to

journey with the unknown. A pang of joy possessed me when I reflected that I was to be in a way associated with him in the adventure, and I too burned with the lust of the chase, not pausing to consider that I knew not what we were to unshadow.

THE next morning Professor Gregg took me into his inner study, where, ranged against the wall, stood a nest of pigeon-holes, every drawer neatly labelled, and the results of years of toil classified in a few feet of space.

"Here," he said, "is my life; here are all the facts which I have gathered together with so much pains, and yet it is all nothing. No, nothing to what I am about to attempt. Look at this"; and he took me to an old bureau, a piece fantastic and faded, which stood in a corner of the room. He unlocked the front and opened one of the drawers.

"A few scraps of paper," he went on, pointing to the drawer, "and a lump of black stone, rudely annotated with queer marks and scratches—that is all that drawer holds. Here you see is an old envelope with the dark red stamp of twenty years ago, but I have pencilled a few lines at the back; here is a sheet of manuscript; and here some cuttings from obscure local journals. And if you ask me the subject-matter of the collection, it will not seem extraordinary—a servant-girl at a farm-house, who disappeared from her place and has never been heard of, a child supposed to have slipped down some old working on the mountains, some queer scribbling on a limestone rock, a man murdered with a blow from a strange weapon; such is the scent I have to go upon.

"Yes, as you say, there is a ready explanation for all this; the girl may have run away to London, or Liverpool, or New York; the child may be at the bottom of the disused shaft; and the letters on the rock may be the idle whims of some vagrant. Yes, yes, I admit all that; but I know I hold the true key. Look!" and he held out a slip of yellow paper.

Characters found inscribed on a limestone rock on the Grey Hills, I read, and then there was a word erased, presumably the name of the county, and a date some fifteen years back. Beneath was traced a number of uncouth characters, shaped somewhat like wedges or daggers, as strange and outlandish as the Hebrew alphabet.

"Now the seal," said Professor Gregg, and he handed me the black stone, a thing about two inches long, and something like an old-fashioned tobacco-stopper, much enlarged.

I held it up to the light, and saw to my surprise the characters on the paper repeated on the seal.

"Yes," said the professor, "they are the same. And the marks on the limestone rock were made fifteen years ago, with some red substance. And the characters on the seal are four thousand years old at least. Perhaps much more."

"Is it a hoax?" I said.

"No, I anticipated that. I was not to be led to give my life to a practical joke. I have tested the matter very carefully. Only one person besides myself knows of the mere existence of that black seal. Besides, there are other reasons which I cannot enter into now."

"But what does it all mean?" I said. "I cannot understand to what conclusion all this leads."

"My dear Miss Lally, that is a question I would rather leave unanswered for some little time. Perhaps I shall never be able to say what secrets are held here in solution; a few vague hints, the outlines of village tragedies, a few marks done with red earth upon a rock, and an ancient seal. A queer set of data to go upon? Half a dozen pieces of evidence, and twenty years before even so much could be got together; and who knows what mirage of *terra incognita* may be beyond all this? I look across deep waters, Miss Lally, and the land beyond may be but a haze after all. But still I believe it is not so, and a few months will show whether I am right or wrong."

He left me, and alone I endeavoured to fathom the mystery, wondering to what goal such eccentric odds and ends of evidence could lead. I myself am not wholly devoid of imagination, and I had reason to respect the professor's solidity of intellect; yet I saw in the contents of the drawer but the materials of fantasy, and vainly tried to conceive what theory could be founded on the fragments that had been placed before me. Indeed, I could discover in what I had heard and seen but the first chapter of an extravagant romance; and yet deep in my heart I burned with curiosity, and day after day I looked eagerly in Professor Gregg's face for some hint of what was to happen.

It was one evening after dinner that the word came.

"I hope you can make your preparations without much trouble," he said suddenly

to me. "We shall be leaving here in a week's time."

"Really!" I said in astonishment. "Where are we going?"

"I have taken a country house in the west of England, not far from Caermaen, a quiet little town, once a city, and the headquarters of a Roman legion. It is very dull there, but the country is pretty, and the air is wholesome."

I detected a glint in his eyes, and guessed that this sudden move had some relation to our conversation of a few days before.

"I shall just take a few books with me," said Professor Gregg, "that is all. Everything else will remain here for our return. I have got a holiday," he went on, smiling at me, "and I shan't be sorry to be quit for a time of my old bones and stones and rubbish. Do you know," he went on, "I have been grinding away at facts for thirty years; it is time for fancies."

THE days passed quickly; I could see that the professor was all quivering with suppressed excitement, and I could scarce credit the eager appetence of his glance as we left the old manorhouse behind us and began our journey.

We set out at midday, and it was in the dusk of the evening that we arrived at a little county station. I was tired and excited, and the drive through the lanes seems all a dream. First the deserted streets of a forgotten village, while I heard Professor Gregg's voice talking of the Augustan Legion and the clash of arms, and all the tremendous pomp that followed the eagles; then the broad river swimming to full tide with the last afterglow glimmering duskily in the yellow water, the wide meadows, the cornfields whitening, and the deep lane winding on the slope between the hills and the water.

At last we began to ascend, and the air grew rarer. I looked down and saw the pure white mist tracking the outline of the river like a shroud, and a vague and shadowy country; imaginations and fantasy of swelling hills and hanging woods, and half-shaped outlines of hills beyond, and in the distance the glare of the furnace fire on the mountain, growing by turns a pillar of shining flame and fading to a dull point of red. We were slowly mounting a carriage drive, and then there came to me the cool breath and the secret of the great wood that was above us; I seemed to wander in its deepest depths, and there was the sound of trickling water, the scent of the green leaves, and the breath of the summer night. The carriage stopped at last, and I could scarcely distinguish the form of the house as I waited a moment at the pillared porch. The rest of the evening seemed a dream of strange things bounded by the great silence of the wood and the valley and the river.

The next morning, when I awoke and looked out of the bow window of the big, old-fashioned bedroom, I saw under a grey sky a country that was still all mystery. The long, lovely valley, with the river winding in and out below, crossed in mid-vision by a mediaeval bridge of vaulted and buttressed stone, the clear presence of the rising ground beyond, and the woods that I had only seen in shadow the night before, seemed tinged with enchantment, and the soft breath of air that sighed in at the opened pane was like no other wind.

I looked across the valley, and beyond, hill followed on hill as wave on wave, and here a faint blue pillar of smoke rose still in the morning air from the chimney of an ancient grey farmhouse, there was a rugged height crowned with dark firs, and in the distance I saw the white streak of a road that climbed and vanished into some unimagined country. But the boundary of all was a great wall of mountain, vast in the west, and ending like a fortress with a steep ascent and a domed tumulus clear against the sky.

I saw Professor Gregg walking up and down the terrace path below the windows, and it was evident that he was revelling in the sense of liberty, and the thought that he had for a while bidden good-bye to task-work. When I joined him there was exultation in his voice as he pointed out the sweep of valley and the river that wound beneath the lovely hills.

"Yes," he said, "it is a strangely beautiful country; and to me, at least, it seems full of mystery. You have not forgotten the drawer I showed you, Miss Lally? No; and you guessed that I have come here not merely for the sake of the children and the fresh air?"

"I think I have guessed as much as that," I replied; "but you must remember I do not know the mere nature of your investigations; and as for the connection between the search and this wonderful valley, it is past my guessing."

He smiled queerly at me. "You must not think I am making a mystery for the sake of a mystery," he said. "I do not speak out because, so far, there is nothing to be spoken, nothing definite, I mean, nothing

that can be set down in hard black and white, as dull and sure and irreproachable as any blue-book. And then I have another reason: Many years ago a chance paragraph in a newspaper caught my attention, and focussed in an instant the vagrant thoughts and half-formed fancies of many idle and speculative hours into a certain hypothesis. I saw at once that I was treading on a thin crust; my theory was wild and fantastic in the extreme, and I would not for any consideration have written hint of it for publication. But I thought that in the company of scientific men like myself, men who knew the course of discovery, and were aware that the gas that blazes and flares in the gin-palace was once a wild hypothesis—I thought that with such men as these I might hazard my dream—let us say Atlantis, or the philosopher's stone, or what you like—without danger of ridicule. I found I was grossly mistaken; my friends looked blankly at me and at one another, and I could see something of pity, and something also of insolent contempt, in the glances they exchanged.

"One of them called on me next day, and hinted that I must be suffering from overwork and brain exhaustion. In plain terms, I said, you think I am going mad. I think not; and I showed him out with some little appearance of heat. Since that day I vowed that I would never whisper the nature of my theory to any living soul; to no one but yourself have I ever shown the contents of that drawer. After all, I may be following a rainbow; I may have been misled by the play of coincidence; but as I stand here in this mystic hush and silence amidst the woods and the wild hills, I am more than ever sure that I am hot on the scent. Come, it is time we went in."

TO ME in all this there was something both of wonder and excitement; I knew how in his ordinary work Professor Gregg moved step by step, testing every inch of the way, and never venturing on assertion without proof that was impregnable. Yet I divined more from his glance and the vehemence of his tone than from the spoken word, that he had in his every thought the vision of the almost incredible continually with him; and I, who was with some share of imagination no little of a sceptic, offended at a hint of the marvellous, could not help asking myself whether he were cherishing a monomania, and barring out from this one subject all the scientific method employed in his other life.

Yet, with this image of mystery haunting my thoughts, I surrendered wholly to the charm of the country. Above the faded house on the hillside began the great forest—a long, dark line seen from the opposing hills, stretching above the river for many a mile from north to south, and yielding in the north to even wilder country, barren and savage hills, and ragged common-land, a territory all strange and unvisited, and more unknown to Englishmen than the very heart of Africa. The space of a couple of steep fields alone separated the house from the wood, and the children were delighted to follow me up the long alleys of undergrowth, between smooth bleached walls of shining beech, to the highest point in the wood, whence one looked on one side across the river and the rise and fall of the country to the great western mountain wall, and on the other over the surge and dip of the myriad trees of the forest, over level meadows and the shining yellow sea to the faint coast beyond. I used to sit at this point on the warm sunlit turf which marked the track of the Roman Road, while the two children raced about hunting for the whinberries that grew here and there on the banks.

Here beneath the deep blue sky and the great clouds rolling, like olden galleons with sails full-bellied, from the sea to the hills, as I listened to the whispered charm of the great and ancient wood, I lived solely for delight, and only remembered strange things when we would return to the house and find Professor Gregg either shut up in the little room he had made his study, or else pacing the terrace with the look, patient and enthusiastic, of the determined seeker.

One morning, some eight or nine days after our arrival, I looked out of my window and saw the whole landscape transmuted before me. The clouds had dipped low and hidden the mountain in the west; a southern wind was driving the rain in shifting pillars up the valley, and the little brooklet that burst the hill below the house now raged, a red torrent, down the river. We were perforce obliged to keep snug within-doors; and when I had attended to my pupils, I sat down in the morning-room where the ruins of a library still encumbered an old-fashioned bookcase. I had inspected the shelves once or twice, but their contents had failed to attract me; volumes of eighteenth-century sermons, an old book on farriery, a collec-

tion of *Poems* by "persons of quality," Prideaux's *Connection*, and an odd volume of Pope, were the boundaries of the library, and there seemed little doubt that everything of interest or value had been removed.

Now however, in desperation, I began to re-examine the musty sheepskin and calf bindings, and found, much to my delight, a fine old quarto printed by the Stephani, containing the three books of Pomponius Mela, *De Situ Orbis*, and other of the ancient geographers. I knew enough of Latin to steer my way through an ordinary sentence, and I soon became absorbed in the odd mixture of fact and fancy—light shining on a little space of the world, and beyond, mist and shadow and awful forms. Glancing over the clear-printed pages, my attention was caught by the heading of a chapter in Solinus, and I read the words:—

"MIRA DE INTIMIS GENTIBUS LIBYAE,
DE LAPIDE HEXECONTALITHO,"

—"The wonders of the people that inhabit the inner parts of Libya, and of the stone called Sixtystone."

The odd title attracted me, and I read on:—"Gens ista avia et secreta habitat, in montibus horrendis fœda mysteria celebrat. De hominibus nihil aliud illi praeferunt quam figuram, ab humano ritu prorsus exulant, oderunt deum lucis. Stridunt potius quam loquuntur; vox absona nec sine horrore auditur. Lapide quodam gloriantur, quem Hexecontalithon vocant; dicunt enim hunc lapidem sexaginta notas ostendere. Cujus lapidis nomen secretum ineffabile colunt: quod Ixaxar."

"This folk," I translated to myself, "dwells in remote and secret places, and celebrates foul mysteries on savage hills. Nothing have they in common with men save the face, and the customs of humanity are wholly strange to them; and they hate the sun. They hiss rather than speak; their voices are harsh, and not to be heard without fear. They boast of a certain stone, which they call Sixtystone; for they say that it displays sixty characters. And this stone has a secret unspeakable name; which is Ixaxar."

I LAUGHED at the queer inconsequence of all this, and thought it fit for "Sinbad the Sailor," or other of the supplementary Nights. When I saw Professor Gregg in the course of the day, I told him of my find in the bookcase, and the fantastic rubbish I had been reading. To my surprise he looked up at me with an expression of great interest.

"That is really very curious," he said. "I have never thought it worth while to look into the old geographers and I dare say I have missed a good deal. Ah, that is the passage, is it? It seems a shame to rob you of your entertainment, but I really think I must carry off the book."

The next day the professor called me to come to the study. I found him sitting at a table in the full light of the window, scrutinizing something very attentively with a magnifying glass.

"Ah, Miss Lally," he began, "I want to use your eyes. This glass is pretty good, but not like my old one that I left in town. Would you mind examining the thing yourself, and telling me how many characters are cut on it?"

He handed me the object in his hand. I saw that it was the black seal he had shown me in London, and my heart began to beat with the thought that I was presently to know something. I took the seal, and, holding it up to the light, checked off the grotesque dagger-shaped characters one by one.

"I make sixty-two," I said at last.

"Sixty-two? Nonsense; it's impossible. Ah, I see what you have done, you have counted that and that," and he pointed to two marks which I had certainly taken as letters with the rest.

"Yes, yes," Professor Gregg went on, "but those are obvious scratches, done accidentally; I saw that at once. Yes, then that's quite right. Thank you very much, Miss Lally."

I was going away, rather disappointed at my having been called in merely to count the number of marks on the black seal, when suddenly there flashed into my mind what I had read in the morning.

"But, Professor Gregg," I cried, breathless, "the seal, the seal. Why, it is the stone Hexecontalithos that Solinus writes of; it is Ixaxar."

"Yes," he said, "I suppose it is. Or it may be a mere coincidence. It never does to be too sure, you know, in these matters. Coincidence killed the professor."

I went away puzzled at what I had heard, and as much as ever at a loss to find the ruling clue in this maze of strange evidence. For three days the bad weather lasted, changing from driving rain to a dense mist, fine and dripping, and we seemed to be shut up in a white cloud that veiled all the world away from us.

All the while Professor Gregg was darkling in his room, unwilling, it appeared, to dispense confidences or talk of any kind, and I heard him walking to and fro with a quick, impatient step, as if he were in some way wearied of inaction. The fourth morning was fine, and at breakfast the professor said briskly:

"We want some extra help around the house; a boy of fifteen or sixteen, you know. There are a lot of little odd jobs that take up the maids' time which a boy could do much better."

"The girls have not complained to me in any way," I replied. "Indeed, Anne said there was much less work than in London, owing to there being so little dust."

"Ah, yes, they are very good girls. But I think we shall do much better with a boy. In fact, that is what has been bothering me for the last two days."

"Bothering you?" I said in astonishment, for as a matter of fact the professor never took the slightest interest in the affairs of the house.

"Yes," he said, "the weather, you know. I really couldn't go out in that Scotch mist; I don't know the country very well, and I should have lost my way. But I am going to get the boy this morning."

"But how do you know there is such a boy as you want anywhere about?"

"Oh, I have no doubt as to that. I may have to walk a mile or two at the most, but I am sure to find just the boy I require."

I thought the professor was joking, but though his tone was airy enough there was something grim and set about his features that puzzled me.

"By the way, Miss Lally, there was one thing I wanted to say to you. I dare say you may have heard that some of these country lads are not over bright; idiotic would be a harsh word to use, and they are usually called naturals, or something of the kind. I hope you won't mind if the boy I am after should turn out not too keenwitted; he will be perfectly harmless, of course, and blacking boots doesn't need much mental effort."

With that he was gone, striding up the road that led to the wood, and I remained stupified; and then for the first time my astonishment was mingled with a sudden note of terror, arising I knew not whence, and all unexplained even to myself, and yet I felt about my heart for an instant something of the chill of death, and that shapeless, formless dread of the unknown that is worse than death itself. I tried to find courage in the sweet air that blew up from the sea, and in the sunlight after rain, but the mystic woods seemed to darken around me; and the vision of the river coiling between the reeds, and the silver grey of the ancient bridge, fashioned in my mind symbols of vague dread, as the mind of a child fashions terror from things harmless and familiar.

TWO hours later Professor Gregg returned. I met him as he came down the road, and asked quietly if he had been able to find a boy.

"Oh, yes," he answered; "I found one easily enough. His name is Jervase Cradock, and I expect he will make himself very useful. His father has been dead for many years, and the mother, whom I saw, seemed very glad at the prospect of a few shillings extra coming in on Saturday nights. As I expected, he is not too sharp, has fits at times, the mother said; but as he will not be trusted with the china, that doesn't much matter, does it? And he is not in any way dangerous, you know, merely a little weak."

"When is he coming?"

"To-morrow morning at eight o'clock. Anne will show him what he has to do, and how to do it. At first he will go home every night, but perhaps it may ultimately turn out more convenient for him to sleep here, and only go home for Sundays."

I found nothing to say to all this; Professor Gregg spoke in a quiet tone of matter-of-fact, as indeed was warranted by the circumstance; and yet I could not quell my sensation of astonishment at the whole affair. I knew that in reality no assistance was wanted in the housework, and the professor's prediction that the boy he was to engage might prove a little "simple," followed by so exact a fulfilment, struck me as bizarre in the extreme. The next morning I heard from the house-maid that the boy Cradock had come at eight, and that she had been trying to make him useful.

"He doesn't seem quite all there, I don't think, miss," was her comment, and later in the day I saw him helping the old man who worked in the garden. He was a youth of about fourteen, with black hair and black eyes and an olive skin, and I saw at once from the curious vacancy of his expression that he was mentally weak. He touched his forehead awkwardly as I went by, and I heard him answering the gardener in a queer, harsh voice that caught my attention; it gave me the im-

pression of some one speaking deep below under the earth, and there was a strange sibilance, like the hissing of the phonograph as the pointer travels over the cylinder. I heard that he seemed anxious to do what he could, and was quite docile and obedient, and Morgan the gardener, who knew his mother, assured me he was perfectly harmless.

"He's always been a bit queer," he said, "and no wonder. I did know his father, Thomas Cradock, well, and a very fine workman he was too, indeed. He got something wrong with his lungs owing to working in the wet woods, and never got over it, and went off quite sudden like. And they do say as how Mrs. Cradock was quite off her head; anyhow, she was found by Mr. Hillyer, Ty Coch, all crouched up on the Grey Hills, over there, crying and weeping like a lost soul. And as I was saying, Jervase was a bit queer always; and they do say when he could scarcely walk he would frighten the other children into fits with the noises he would make."

A word in the story had stirred up some remembrance within me, and vaguely curious, I asked the old man where the Grey Hills were.

"Up there," he said, with the same gesture he had used before; "you go past the Fox and Hounds, and through the forest, by the old ruins. It's a good five mile from here, and a strange sort of a place. The poorest soil between this and Monmouth, they do say, though it's good feed for sheep. Yes, it was a sad thing for poor Mrs. Cradock."

The old man turned to his work, and I strolled on down the path between the espaliers, gnarled and gouty with age, thinking of the story I had heard, and groping for the point in it that had some key to my memory. In an instant it came before me; I had seen the phrase "Grey Hills" on the slip of yellowed paper that Professor Gregg had taken from the drawer in his cabinet. Again I was seized with pangs of mingled curiosity and fear; I remembered the strange characters copied from the limestone rock, and then again their identity with the inscription on the age-old seal, and the fantastic fables of the Latin geographer.

I saw beyond doubt that, unless coincidence had set all the scene and disposed all these bizarre events with curious art, I was to be a spectator of things far removed from the usual and customary traffic and jostle of life. Professor Gregg I noted day by day; he was hot on his trail, growing lean with eagerness; and in the evenings, when the sun was swimming on the verge of the mountain, he would pace the terrace to and fro with his eyes on the ground, while the mist grew white in the valley, and the stillness of the evening brought far voices near, and the blue smoke rose a straight column from the diamond-shaped chimney of the grey farmhouse, just as I had seen it on the first morning.

I have told you I was of sceptical habit; but though I understood little or nothing, I began to dread, vainly proposing to myself the iterated dogmas of science that all life is material, and that in the system of things there is no undiscovered land, even beyond the remotest stars, where the supernatural can find a footing. Yet there struck in on this the thought that matter is as really awful and unknown as spirit, that science itself but dallies on the threshold, scarcely gaining more than a glimpse of the wonders of the inner place.

THERE is one day that stands up from amidst the others as a grim red beacon, betokening evil to come. I was sitting on a bench in the garden, watching the boy Cradock weeding, when I was suddenly alarmed by a harsh and choking sound, like the cry of a wild beast in anguish, and I was unspeakably shocked to see the unfortunate lad standing in full view before me, his whole body quivering and shaking at short intervals as though shocks of electricity were passing through him, his teeth grinding, foam gathering on his lips, and his face all swollen and blackened to a hideous mask of humanity. I shrieked with terror, and Professor Gregg came running; and as I pointed to Cradock, the boy with one convulsive shudder fell face forward, and lay on the wet earth, his body writhing like a wounded blind worm, and an inconceivable babble of sounds bursting and rattling and hissing from his lips. He seemed to pour forth an infamous jargon, with words, or what seemed words, that might have belonged to a tongue dead since untold ages, and buried deep beneath Nilotic mud, or in the inmost recesses of the Mexican forest.

For a moment the thought passed through my mind, as my ears were still revolted with that infernal clamour, "Surely this is the very speech of hell," and then I cried out again and again, and ran away shuddering to my inmost soul. I had seen Professor Gregg's face as he stooped over the wretched boy and raised him; I was

appalled by the glow of exultation that shone on every lineament and feature.

As I sat in my room with drawn blinds, and my eyes hidden in my hands, I heard heavy steps beneath, and I was told afterwards that Professor Gregg had carried Cradock to his study, and had locked the door. I heard voices murmur indistinctly, and I trembled to think of what might be passing within a few feet of where I sat; I longed to escape to the woods and sunshine, and yet I dreaded the sights that might confront me on the way; and at last, as I held the handle of the door nervously, I heard Professor Gregg's voice calling to me with a cheerful ring. "It's all right now, Miss Lally," he said. "The poor fellow has got over it, and I have been arranging for him to sleep here after tomorrow. Perhaps I may be able to do something for him."

"Yes," he said later, "it was a very painful sight, and I don't wonder you were alarmed. We may hope that good food will build him up a little, but I am afraid he will never be really cured," and he affected the dismal and conventional air with which one speaks of hopeless illness; and yet beneath it I detected the delight that leapt up rampant within him, and fought and struggled to find utterance.

It was as if one glanced down on the even surface of the sea, clear and immobile, and saw beneath raging depths and a storm of contending billows. It was indeed to me a torturing and offensive problem that this man, who had so bounteously rescued me from the sharpness of death, and showed himself in all the relations of life full of benevolence, and pity, and kindly forethought, should so manifestly be for once on the side of the demons, and take a ghastly pleasure in the torments of an afflicted fellow-creature.

Apart, I struggled with the horned difficulty, and strove to find the solution; but without the hint of a clue, beset by mystery and contradiction. I saw nothing that might help me, and began to wonder whether, after all, I had not escaped from the white mist of the suburb at too dear a rate. I hinted something of my thought to the professor; I said enough to let him know that I was in the most acute perplexity, but the moment after regretted what I had done when I saw his face contort with a spasm of pain.

"My dear Miss Lally," he said, "you surely do not wish to leave us? No, no, you would not do it. You do not know how I rely on you; how confidently I go forward, assured that you are here to watch over my children. You, Miss Lally, are my rearguard; for let me tell you the business in which I am engaged is not wholly devoid of peril. You have not forgotten what I said the first morning here; my lips are shut by an old and firm resolve till they can open to utter no ingenious hypothesis or vague surmise but irrefragable fact, as certain as a demonstration in mathematics. Think over it, Miss Lally: not for a moment would I endeavour to keep you here against your own instincts, and yet I tell you frankly that I am persuaded it is here, here amidst the woods, that your duty lies."

I WAS touched by the eloquence of his tone, and by the remembrance that the man, after all, had been my salvation, and I gave him my hand on a promise to serve him loyally and without question. A few days later the rector of our church—a little church, grey and severe and quaint, that hovered on the very banks of the river and watched the tides swim and return—came to see us, and Professor Gregg easily persuaded him to stay and share our dinner. Mr. Meyrick was a member of an antique family of squires, whose old manorhouse stood amongst the hills some seven miles away, and thus rooted in the soil, the rector was a living store of all the old fading customs and lore of the country. His manner, genial, with a deal of retired oddity, won on Professor Gregg; and towards the cheese, when a curious Burgundy had begun its incantations, the two men glowed like the wine, and talked of philology with the enthusiasm of a burgess over the peerage. The parson was expounding the pronunciation of the Welsh *ll* and producing sounds like the gurgle of his native brooks, when Professor Gregg struck in.

"By the way," he said, "that was a very odd word I met the other day. You know my boy, poor Jervase Cradock? Well, he has got the bad habit of talking to himself, and the day before yesterday I was walking in the garden here and heard him; he was evidently quite unconscious of my presence. A lot of what he said I couldn't make out, but one word struck me distinctly. It was such an odd sound, half sibilant, half guttural, and as quaint as those double *ls* you have been demonstrating. I do not know where I can give you an idea of the sound; 'Ishakshar' is perhaps as near as I can get. But the *k* ought to be a Greek *chi* or a Spanish *j*.

Now what does that mean in Welsh?"

"In Welsh?" said the parson. "There is no such word in Welsh, nor any word remotely resembling it. I know the book-Welsh, as they call it, and the colloquial dialects as well as any man, but there's no word like that from Anglesea to Usk. Besides, none of the Cradocks speaks a word of Welsh; it's dying out about here."

"Really. You interest me extremely, Mr. Meyrick. I confess the word didn't strike me as having the Welsh ring. But I thought it might be some local corruption."

"No, I never heard such a word, or anything like it. Indeed," he added, smiling whimsically, "if it belongs to any language, I should say it must be that of the fairies—the Tylwydd Têg, as we call them."

The talk went on to discovery of a Roman villa in the neighbourhood; and soon after I left the room, and sat down apart to wonder at the drawing together of such strange clues of evidence. As the professor had spoken of the curious word, I had caught the glint of his eye upon me; and though the pronunciation he gave was grotesque in the extreme, I recognized the name of the stone of sixty characters mentioned by Solinus, the black seal shut up in some secret drawer of the study, stamped for ever by a vanished race with signs that no man could read, signs that might, for all I knew, be the veils of awful things done long ago, and forgotten before the hills were moulded into form.

When the next morning I came down, I found Professor Gregg pacing the terrace in his eternal walk.

"Look at that bridge," he said, when he saw me; "observe the quaint and Gothic design, the angles between the arches, and the silvery grey of the stone in the awe of the morning light. I confess it seems to me symbolic; it should illustrate a mystical allegory of the passage from one world to another."

"Professor Gregg," I said quietly, "it is time that I knew something of what has happened, and of what is to happen."

For the moment he put me off, but I returned again with the same question in the evening, and then Professor Gregg flamed with excitement. "Don't you understand yet?" he cried. "But I have told you a good deal; yes, and shown you a good deal; you have heard pretty nearly all that I have heard, and seen what I have seen; or at least," his voice chilled as he spoke, "enough to make a good deal clear as noonday. The servants told you, I have no doubt, that the wretched boy Cradock had another seizure the night before last; he awoke me with cries in that voice you heard in the garden, and I went to him, and God forbid you should see what I saw that night. But all this is useless; my time here is drawing to a close; I must be back in town in three weeks, as I have a course of lectures to prepare, and need all my books about me. In a very few days it will all be over, and I shall no longer hint, and no longer be liable to ridicule as a madman and a quack. No, I shall speak plainly, and I shall be heard with such emotions as perhaps no other man has ever drawn from the breasts of his fellows."

He paused, and seemed to grow radiant with the joy of great and wonderful discovery.

"But all that is for the future, the near future certainly, but still the future," he went on at length. "There is something to be done yet; you will remember my telling you that my researches were not altogether devoid of peril? Yes, there is a certain amount of danger to be faced; I did not know how much when I spoke on the subject before, and to a certain extent I am still in the dark. But it will be a strange adventure, the last of all, the last demonstration in the chain."

HE WAS walking up and down the room as he spoke, and I could hear in his voice the contending tones of exultation and despondence, or perhaps I should say awe, the awe of a man who goes forth on unknown waters, and I thought of his allusion to Columbus on the night he had laid his book before me. The evening was a little chilly, and a fire of logs had been lighted in the study where we were; the remittent flame and the glow on the walls reminded me of the old days. I was sitting silent in an arm-chair by the fire, wondering over all I had heard, and still vainly speculating as to the secret springs concealed from me under all the phantasmagoria I had witnessed, when I became suddenly aware of a sensation that change of some sort had been at work in the room, and that there was something unfamiliar in its aspect.

For some time I looked about me, trying in vain to localize the alteration that I knew had been made; the table by the window, the chairs, the faded settee were all as I had known them. Suddenly, as a sought-for recollection flashed into mind, I knew what was amiss. I was facing the professor's desk, which stood on the other

side of the fire, and above the desk was a grimy-looking bust of Pitt, that I had never seen there before. And then I remembered the true position of this work of art; in the furthest corner by the door was an old cupboard, projecting into the room, and on the top of the cupboard, fifteen feet from the floor, the bust had been, and there, no doubt, it had delayed, accumulating dirt, since the early years of the century.

I was utterly amazed, and sat silent still, in a confusion of thought. There was, so far as I knew, no such thing as a step-ladder in the house, for I had asked for one to make some alterations in the curtains of my room, and a tall man standing on a chair would have found it impossible to take down the bust. It had been placed, not on the edge of the cupboard, but far back against the wall; and Professor Gregg was, if anything, under the average height.

"How on earth did you manage to get down Pitt?" I said at last.

The professor looked curiously at me, and seemed to hesitate a little.

"They must have found you a step-ladder, or perhaps the gardener brought in a short ladder from outside?"

"No, I have had no ladder of any kind. Now, Miss Lally," he went on with an awkward simulation of jest, "there is a little puzzle for you; a problem in the manner of the inimitable Holmes; there are the facts, plain and patent; summon your acuteness to the solution of the puzzle. For Heaven's sake," he cried with a breaking voice, "say no more about it! I tell you I never touched the thing," and he went out of the room with horror manifest on his face, and his hand shook and jarred the door behind him.

I looked round the room in vague surprise, not at all realizing what had happened, making vain and idle surmises by way of explanation, and wondering at the stirring of black waters by an idle word and the trivial change of an ornament.

I WENT out to the kitchen and spoke as quietly as I could to the housemaid.

"Who moved that bust from the top of the cupboard, Anne?" I said to her. "Professor Gregg says he has not touched it. Did you find an old step-ladder in one of the outhouses?"

The girl looked at me blankly.

"I never touched it," she said. "I found it where it is now the other morning when I dusted the room. I remember now, it was Wednesday morning, because it was the morning after Cradock was taken bad in the night. My room is next to his, you know, miss," the girl went on piteously, "and it was awful to hear how he cried and called out names I couldn't understand. It made me feel all afraid; and then master came, and I heard him speak, and he took down Cradock to the study and gave him something."

"And you found that bust moved the next morning?"

"Yes, miss. There was a queer sort of smell in the study when I came down and opened the windows; a bad smell it was, and I wondered what it could be. Do you know, miss, I went a long time ago to the Zoo in London with my cousin Thomas Barker, one afternoon that I had off, when I was at Mrs. Prince's in Stanhope Gate, and we went into the snake-house to see the snakes, and it was just the same sort of smell; very sick it made me feel, I remember, and I got Barker to take me out. And it was just the same kind of a smell in the study, as I was saying, and I was wondering what it could be from, when I see that bust with Pitt cut in it, standing on the master's desk, and I thought to myself, Now who has done that, and how have they done it? And when I came to dust the things, I looked at the bust, and I saw a great mark on it where the dust was gone, for I don't think it can have been touched with a duster for years and years, and it wasn't like finger-marks, but a large patch like, broad and spread out. So I passed my hand over it, without thinking what I was doing, and where that patch was it was all sticky and slimy, as if a snail had crawled over it. Very strange, isn't it, miss? And I wonder who can have done it, and how that mess was made."

The well-meant gabble of the servant touched me to the quick; I lay down upon my bed, and bit my lip that I should not cry out loud in the sharp anguish of my terror and bewilderment.

If I knew, I thought, if I knew what there were to dread, I could guard against it; but here, in this lonely house, shut in on all sides by the olden woods and the vaulted hills, terror seems to spring inconsequent from every covert, and the flesh is aghast at the half-heard murmurs of horrible things.

The next morning, the moment that I set foot in the breakfast-room, I felt that the unknown plot was drawing to a crisis; the professor's face was firm and set, and

he seemed hardly to hear our voices when we spoke.

"I am going out for a rather long walk," he said when the meal was over. "You mustn't be expecting me, now, or thinking anything has happened if I don't turn up to dinner. I have been getting stupid lately, and I dare say a miniature walking tour will do me good. Perhaps I may even spend the night in some little inn, if I find any place that looks clean and comfortable."

I heard this and knew by my experience of Professor Gregg's manner that it was no ordinary business or pleasure that impelled him. I knew not, nor even remotely guessed, where he was bound, nor had I the vaguest notion of his errand, but all the fear of the night before returned; and as he stood, smiling, on the terrace, ready to set out, I implored him to stay, and to forget all his dreams of the undiscovered continent.

"No, no, Miss Lally," he replied still smiling, "it's too late now. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum,* you know, is the device of all true explorers, though I hope it won't be literally true in my case. But, indeed, you are wrong to alarm yourself so; I look upon my little expedition as quite commonplace; no more exciting than a day with the geological hammers. There is a risk, of course, but so there is on the commonest excursion. I can afford to be jaunty; I am doing nothing so hazardous as 'Arry does a hundred times over in the course of every Bank Holiday. Well, then, you must look more cheerfully; and so good-bye till to-morrow at latest."

He walked briskly up the road, and I saw him open the gate that marks the entrance of the wood, and then he vanished in the gloom of the trees.

ALL the day passed heavily with a strange darkness in the air, and again I felt as if imprisoned amidst the ancient woods, shut in an olden land of mystery and dread, and as if all was long ago and forgotten by the living outside. I hoped and dreaded; and when the dinner-hour came I waited, expecting to hear the professor's step in the hall, and his voice exulting at I knew not what triumph. I composed my face to welcome him gladly, but the night descended dark, and he did not come.

In the morning, when the maid knocked at my door, I called out to her, and asked if her master had returned; and when she replied that his bedroom stood open and empty, I felt the cold clasp of despair.

Again the night came and it found me watching, and at last, as I was making much ado to finish my dinner, I heard steps outside and the sound of a man's voice.

The maid came in and looked oddly at me. "Please, miss," she began, "Mr. Morgan the gardener wants to speak to you for a minute, if you didn't mind."

"Show him in, please," I answered, and set my lips tight.

The old man came slowly into the room, and the servant shut the door behind him.

"Sit down, Mr. Morgan," I said; "what is it that you want to say to me?"

"Well, miss, Mr. Gregg he gave me something for you yesterday morning, just before he went off; and he told me particular not to hand it up before eight o'clock this evening exactly, if so be as he wasn't back home again before, and if he should come home before I was just to return it to him in his own hands. So, you see, as Mr. Gregg isn't here yet, I suppose I'd better give you the parcel."

He pulled out something from his pocket, and gave it to me, half rising. I took it silently, and seeing that Morgan seemed doubtful as to what he was to do next, I thanked him and bade him good-night, and he went out. I was left alone in the room with the parcel in my hand—a paper parcel neatly sealed and directed to me, with the instructions Morgan had quoted, all written in the professor's large loose hand. I broke the seals with a choking at my heart, and found an envelope inside, addressed also, but open, and I took the letter out, read:

"MY DEAR MISS LALLY:

"To quote out of the old logic manual, the case of your reading this note is a case of my having made a blunder of some sort, and, I am afraid, a blunder that turns these lines into a farewell. It is practically certain that neither you nor any one else will ever see me again. I have made my will with provision for this eventuality, and I hope you will consent to accept the small remembrance addressed to you, and my sincere thanks for the way in which you joined your fortunes to mine. The fate which has come upon me is desperate and terrible beyond the remotest dreams of man; but this fate you have a right to know—if you please. If you look in the left-hand drawer of my dressing-table, you will find the key of the

escritoire, properly labelled. In the well of the escritoire is a large envelope sealed and addressed to your name. I advise you to throw it forthwith into the fire; you will sleep better of nights if you do so. But if you must know the history of what has happened, it is all written down for you to read."

THE signature was firmly written below, and again I turned the page and read out the words one by one, aghast and white to the lips, my hands cold as ice, and sickness choking me. The dead silence of the room, and the thought of the dark woods and hills closing me in on every side, oppressed me, helpless and without capacity, and not knowing where to turn for counsel. At last I resolved that though knowledge should haunt my whole life and all the days to come, I must know the meaning of the strange terrors that had so long tormented me, rising grey, dim, and awful, like the shadows in the wood at dusk. I carefully carried out Professor Gregg's directions, and not without reluctance broke the seal of the envelope, and spread out his manuscript before me. That manuscript I always carry with me, and I see that I cannot deny your unspoken request to read it. This, then, was what I read that night, sitting at the desk, with a shaded lamp beside me.

THE STATEMENT OF WILLIAM GREGG, F. R. S., ETC.

It is many years since the first glimmer of the theory which is now almost, if not quite, reduced to fact dawned on my mind. A somewhat extensive course of miscellaneous and obsolete reading had done a good deal to prepare the way, and, later, when I became somewhat of a specialist, and immersed myself in the studies known as ethnological, I was now and then startled by facts that would not square with orthodox scientific opinion, and by discoveries that seemed to hint at something still hidden for all our research. More particularly I became convinced that much of the folk-lore of the world is but an exaggerated account of events that really happened, and I was especially drawn to consider the stories of the fairies, the good folk of the Celtic races. Here I thought I could detect the fringe of embroidery and exaggeration, the fantastic guise, the little people dressed in green and gold sporting in the flowers, and I thought I saw a distinct analogy between the name given to this race (supposed to be imaginary) and the description of them.

Just as our remote ancestors called the dreadful beings "fair" and "good" precisely because they dreaded them, so they had dressed them up in charming forms, knowing the truth to be the very reverse. Literature, too, had gone early to work, and had lent a powerful hand in the transformation, so that the playful elves of Shakespeare are already far removed from the true original, and the real horror is disguised in a form of prankish mischief. But in the older tales, the stories that used to make men cross themselves as they sat round the burning logs, we tread a different stage; I saw a widely opposed spirit in certain histories of children and of men and women who vanished strangely from the earth. They would be seen by a peasant in the fields walking towards some green and rounded hillock, and seen no more on earth; and there are stories of mothers who have left a child quietly sleeping, with the cottage door rudely barred with a piece of wood, and have returned, not to find the plump and rosy little Saxon, but a thin and wizened creature, with sallow skin and black, piercing eyes, the child of another race.

Then, again, there were myths darker still; the dread of witch and wizard, the lurid evil of the Sabbath, and the hint of demons who mingled with the daughters of men. And just as we have turned the terrible "fair folk" into a company of benignant, if freakish, elves, so we have hidden from us the black foulness of the witch and her companions under a popular *diablerie* of old women and broomsticks and a comic cat with tail on end. So the Greeks called the hideous furies benevolent ladies, and thus the northern nations have followed their example. I pursued my investigations, stealing odd hours from other and more imperative labours, and I asked myself the question: Supposing these traditions to be true, who were the demons attending the Sabbaths?

I need not say that I laid aside what I may call the supernatural hypothesis of the Middle Ages, and came to the conclusion that fairies and devils were of one and the same race and origin; invention, no doubt, and the Gothic fancy of old days, had done much in the way of exaggeration and distortion; yet I firmly believe that beneath all this imagery there was a black background of truth. As for some of the alleged wonders, I hesitated. While I should be very loath to receive any

one specific instance of modern spiritualism as containing even a grain of genuine, yet I was not wholly prepared to deny that human flesh may now and then, once perhaps in ten million cases, be the veil of powers which seem magical to us—powers which, so far from proceeding from the heights and leading men thither, are in reality survivals from the depth of being. The amoeba and the snail have powers which we do not possess; and I thought it possible that the theory of reversion might explain many things.

Thus stood my position; I saw good reason to believe that much of the tradition of the so-called fairies represented solid fact, and I thought that the purely supernatural element in these traditions was to be accounted for on the hypothesis that a race which had fallen out of the grand march of evolution might have retained, as a survival, certain powers which would be to us wholly miraculous. Such was my theory as it stood conceived in my mind; and working with this in view, I seemed to gather confirmation from every side, from the spoils of a tumulus or a barrow, from a local paper reporting an antiquarian meeting in the country, and from general literature of all kinds. Amongst other instances, I remember being struck by the phrase "articulate-speaking men" in Homer, as if the writer knew or had heard of men whose speech was so rude that it could hardly be termed articulate; and on my hypothesis of a race who had lagged far behind the rest, I could easily conceive that such a folk would speak a jargon but little removed from the inarticulate noises of brute beasts.

THUS I stood, satisfied that my conjecture was at all events not far removed from fact, when a chance paragraph in a small country print one day arrested my attention. It was a short account of what was to all appearance the usual sordid tragedy of the village—a young girl unaccountably missing, and evil rumour blatant and busy with gossip about her. Yet, I could read between the lines that all this scandal was purely hypocritical, and in all probability invented to account for what was in any other manner unaccountable. A flight to London or Liverpool, or an undiscovered body lying with a weight about its neck in the foul depths of a woodland pool, or perhaps murder—such were the theories of the

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wretched girl's neighbours. But as I idly scanned the paragraph, a flash of thought passed through me with the violence of an electric shock: what if the obscure and horrible race of the hills still survived, still remained haunting the wild places and barren hills, and now and then repeating the evil of Gothic legend, unchanged and unchangeable as the Turanian Shelta, or the Basques of Spain?

I have said that the thought came with violence; and indeed I drew in my breath sharply, and clung with both hands to my elbow-chair, in a strange confusion of horror and elation. It was as if one of my *confrères* of Physical science, roaming in a quiet English wood, had been suddenly stricken aghast by the presence of the slimy and loathsome terror of the ichthyosaurus, the original of the stories of the awful worms killed by valorous knights, or had seen the sun darkened by the pterodactyl, the dragon of tradition. Yet as a resolute explorer of knowledge, the thought of such a discovery threw me into a passion of joy, and I cut out the slip from the paper and put it in a drawer in my old bureau.

I sat long that evening dreaming of the conclusions I should establish, nor did cooler reflection at first dash my confidence. Yet as I began to put the case fairly, I saw that I might be building on an unstable foundation; the facts might possibly be in accordance with local opinion, and I regarded the affair with a mood of some reserve. Yet I resolved to remain perched on the look-out, and I hugged to myself the thought that I alone was watching and wakeful, while the great crowd of thinkers and searchers stood heedless and indifferent.

SEVERAL years elapsed before I was enabled to add to the contents of the drawer; and the second find was in reality not a valuable one, for it was a mere repetition of the first, with only the variation of another and distant locality. Yet I gained something; for in the second case, as in the first, the tragedy took place in a desolate and lonely country, and so far my theory seemed justified. But the third piece was to me far more decisive. Again, amongst outland hills, far even from a main road of traffic, an old man was found done to death, and the instrument of execution was left beside him.

Here, indeed, there were rumour and

conjecture, for the deadly tool was a primitive stone axe, bound by gut to the wooden handle, and surmises the most extravagant and improbable were indulged in. Yet, as I thought with a kind of glee, the wildest conjectures went far astray; and I took the pains to enter into correspondence with the local doctor, who was called at the inquest. He, a man of some acuteness, was dumbfounded. "It will not do to speak of these things in country places," he wrote to me; "but frankly, there is some hideous mystery here. I have obtained possession of the stone axe, and have been so curious as to test its powers. I took it into the back-garden of my house one Sunday afternoon when my family and the servants were all out, and there, sheltered by the poplar hedges, I made my experiments. I found the thing utterly unmanageable; whether there is some peculiar balance, some nice adjustment of weights, which require incessant practice, or whether an effectual blow can be struck only by a certain trick of the muscles, I do not know; but I can assure you that I went into the house with but a sorry opinion of my athletic capacities. It was like an inexperienced man trying putting the hammer; the force exerted seemed to return on oneself, and I found myself hurled backwards with violence, while the axe fell harmless to the ground. On another occasion I tried the experiment with a clever woodman of the place; but this man, who had handled his axe for forty years, could do nothing with the stone implement, and missed every stroke most ludicrously. In short, if it were not so supremely absurd, I should say that for four thousand years no one on earth could have struck an effective blow with the tool that undoubtedly was used for the murder."

This, as may be imagined, was to me rare news; and afterwards, when I heard the whole story, and learned that the unfortunate old man had babbled tales of what might be seen at night on a certain wild hillside, hinting at unheard-of wonders, and that he had been found cold one morning on the very hill in question, my exultation was extreme, for I felt I was leaving conjecture far behind me. But the next step was of still greater importance. I had possessed for many years an extraordinary stone seal—a piece of dull black stone, two inches long from the handle to the stamp, and the stamping

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end a rough hexagon an inch and a quarter in diameter. Altogether, it presented the appearance of an enlarged tobacco stopper of an oldfashioned make. It had been sent to me by an agent in the East, who informed me that it had been found near the site of the ancient Babylon. But the characters engraved on the seal were to me an intolerable puzzle. Somewhat of the cuneiform pattern, there were yet striking differences, which I detected at the first glance, and all efforts to read the inscription on the hypothesis that the rules for deciphering the arrow-headed writing would apply proved futile.

Judge, then, of my surprise when I one day received from a correspondent in the west of England a letter and an enclosure that positively left me thunderstruck. I saw carefully traced on a large piece of paper the very characters of the Black Seal, without alteration of any kind, and above the inscription my friend had written: *Inscription found on a limestone rock on the Grey Hills, Monmouth shire. Done in some red earth, and quite recent.* I turned to the letter. My friend wrote: "I sent you the enclosed inscription with all due reserve. A shepherd who passed by the stone a week ago swears that there was no mark of any kind.

"I visited the stone in question two days ago in connection with a rather painful incident which has occurred here."

As may be supposed, I wrote immediately to my friend, thanking him for the copy of the inscription, and asking him in a casual manner the history of the incident he mentioned. To be brief, I heard that a woman named Cradock, who had lost her husband a day before, had set out to communicate the sad news to a cousin who lived some five miles away. She took a short cut which led by the Grey Hills. Mrs. Cradock, who was then quite a young woman, never arrived at her relative's house. Late that night a farmer who had lost a couple of sheep, supposed to have wandered from the flock, was walking over the Grey Hills, with a lantern and his dog. His attention was attracted by a noise, which he described as a kind of wailing, mournful and pitiable to hear; and, guided by the sound, he found the unfortunate Mrs. Cradock crouched on the ground by the limestone rock, swaying her body to and fro, and lamenting and crying in so heart-rending a manner that the farmer, was, as he says, at first obliged

to stop his ears, or he would have run away. The woman allowed herself to be taken home, and a neighbor came to see to her necessities. All the night she never ceased her crying, mixing her lament with words of some unintelligible jargon, and when the doctor arrived he pronounced her insane.

She lay on her bed for a week, now wailing, like one lost and damned for eternity, and now sunk in a heavy coma; it was thought that grief at the loss of her husband had unsettled her mind.

I need not say that I was deeply interested in this story, and I made my friend write to me at intervals with all the particulars of the case. I heard then that in the course of six weeks the woman gradually recovered the use of her faculties, and some months later she gave birth to a son, christened Jervase, who unhappily proved to be of weak intellect.

BUT now, knowing so much, I resolved I would know all, and I concentrated my efforts on the task of deciphering the incription on the Black Seal. For many years I made this puzzle the sole object of my leisure moments; for the greater portion of my time was, of course, devoted to other duties, and it was only now and then that I could snatch a week of clear research. If I were to tell the full history of this curious investigation, this statement would be wearisome in the extreme, for it would contain simply the account of long and tedious failure. By what I knew already of ancient scripts I was well equipped for the chase, as I always termed it to myself. I had correspondents amongst all the scientific men in Europe, and indeed, in the world, and I could not believe

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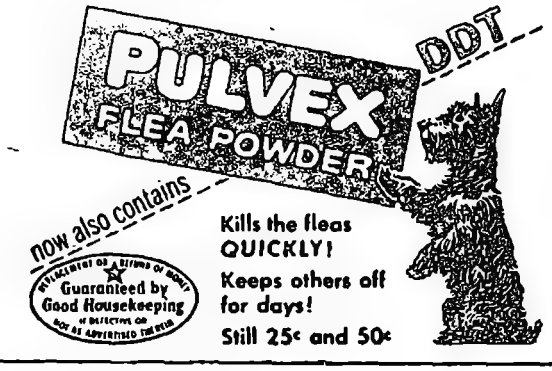

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that in these days any character, however ancient and however perplexed, could long resist the search-light I should bring to bear upon it. I began in the course of years to despair, and to wonder whether the Black Seal were the sole relic of some race that had vanished from the world and left no other trace of its existence—had perished, in fine, as Atlantis is said to have done, in some great cataclysm, its secrets perhaps drowned beneath the ocean or moulded into the heart of the hills. Chance came to the rescue. I was staying in a considerable town in the north of England, and took the opportunity of going over the very creditable museum that had for some time been established in the place. The curator was one of my correspondents; and, as we were looking through one of the mineral cases, my attention was struck by a specimen, a piece of black stone some four inches square, the appearance of which reminded me in a measure of the Black Seal. I took it up carelessly, and was turning it over in my hand, when I saw, to my astonishment, that the under side was inscribed. I said, quietly enough, to my friend the curator that the specimen interested me, and that I should be much obliged if he would allow me to take it with me to my hotel for a couple of days. He, of course, made no objection, and I hurried to my rooms and found that my first glance had not deceived me. There were two inscriptions; one in the regular cuneiform character, another in the character of the Black Seal, and I realized that my task was accomplished.

I made an exact copy of the two inscriptions; and when I got to my London study, and had the Seal before me, I was able seriously to grapple with the great problem. The interpreting inscription on the museum specimen, though in itself curious enough, did not bear on my quest, but the transliteration made me master of the secret of the Black Seal. Conjecture, of course, had to enter into my calculations; there was here and there uncertainty about a particular ideograph, and one sign recurring again and again on the seal baffled me for many successive nights. But at last the secret stood open before me in plain English, and I read the key of the awful transmutation of the hills.

The last word was hardly written, when with fingers all trembling and unsteady

I tore the scrap of paper into the minutest fragments, and saw them flame and blacken in the red hollow of the fire, and then I crushed the grey films that remained into the finest powder. Never since then have I written those words; never will I write the phrases which tell how man can be reduced to the slime from which he came, and be forced to put on the flesh of the reptile and the snake. There was now but one thing remaining. I knew, but I desired to see, and I was after some time able to take a house in the neighbourhood of the Grey Hills, and not far from the cottage where Mrs. Cradock and her son Jervase resided.

I knew by then that I should find in Jervase Cradock something of the "Little People," and I found later that he had more than once encountered his kinsmen in lonely places in that lonely land. When I was summoned one day to the garden, and found him in a seizure speaking or hissing the ghastly jargon of the Black Seal, I am afraid that exultation prevailed over pity.

I heard bursting from the lips the secrets of the underworld, and the word of dread, "Ishakshar," signification of which I must be excused from giving.

But there is one incident I cannot pass over unnoticed. In the waste hollow of the night I awoke at the sound of those hissing syllables I knew so well; and on going to the wretched boy's room, I found him convulsed and foaming at the mouth, struggling on the bed as if he strove to escape the grasp of writhing demons. I took him down to my room and lit the lamp, while he lay twisting on the floor, calling on the power within his flesh to leave him. I saw his body swell and be-

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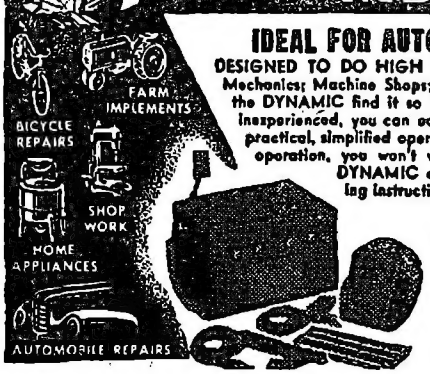

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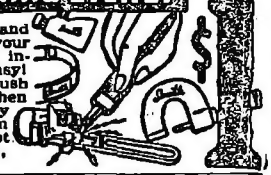

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come distended as a bladder, while the face blackened before my eyes; and then at the crisis I did what was necessary according to the directions on the Seal, and putting all scruple on one side, I became a man of science, observant of what was passing. Yet the sight I had to witness was horrible, almost beyond the power of human conception and the most fearful fantasy. Something pushed out from the body there on the floor, and stretched forth, a slimy, wavering tentacle, across the room, grasped the bust upon the cupboard, and laid it down on my desk.

When it was over, and I was left to walk up and down all the rest of the night, white and shuddering, with sweat pouring from my flesh, I vainly tried to reason with myself: I said, truly enough, that I had seen nothing really supernatural, that a snail pushing out his horns and drawing them in was but an instance on a smaller scale of what I had witnessed; and yet horror broke through all such reasonings and left me shattered and loathing myself for the share I had taken in the night's work.

There is little more to be said. I am going now to the final trial and encounter; for I have determined that there shall be nothing wanting, and I shall meet the "Little People" face to face. I shall have the Black Seal and the knowledge of its secrets to help me, and if I unhappily do not return from my journey, there is no need to conjure up here a picture of the awfulness of my fate.

SUCH was the almost incredible story that the professor left behind him. When I had finished reading it, it was late at night, but the next morning I took Morgan with me, and we proceeded to search the Grey Hills for some trace of the lost professor. I will not weary you with a description of the savage desolation of that tract of country, a tract of utterest loneliness, of bare green hills dotted over with grey limestone boulders, worn by the ravages of time into fantastic semblances of men and beasts. Finally we found his watch and chain, the purse, and the ring—wrapped in a piece of coarse parchment.

And then the sight of the dreaded characters of the Black Seal repeated on the parchment froze me to silent horror, and I think I understood for the first time the awful fate that had come upon my late employer.

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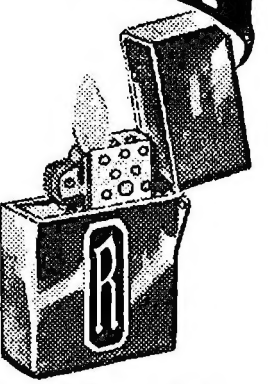

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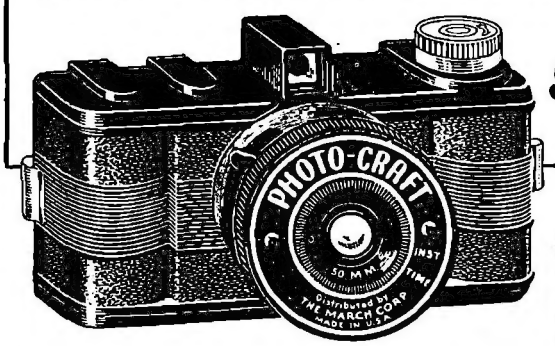

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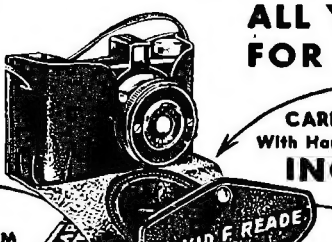

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